The Bible Riots, The Church Question, and Evangelical Theology
Alexander Campbell, Charles Hodge, and John Williamson Nevin on the True Church

by

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Abstract
This dissertation begins by examining the ecclesiology of three prominent theologians of the American antebellum period. Alexander Campbell, Charles Hodge, and John Williamson Nevin were all Scotch-Irish Presbyterians by birth who self-consciously moved in disparate theological directions over the course of the early 19th century. Tracing the diverging paths of these thinkers with regard to their understanding of the nature and organization of the Church, this work aims to show the ecclesiological diversity among antebellum evangelicalism and challenge some of the historiographical and theological assumptions of this period. From this inductive study, an ecclesiological typology is constructed through the use of Campbell, Hodge, and Nevin as prototypes of the individual ideal types. This typology is then brought into conversation with three contemporary examples of 21st-century evangelical theology, using the Missional Church movement, The Gospel Coalition, and the Federal Vision. This cross-century comparison is an attempt to test the thesis that contemporary evangelical ecclesiology – despite its repeated claims – is not doing anything new, but instead it finds itself inhabiting the same ecclesiological types evident in the antebellum period. This typological comparison brings to light a more nuanced and fulsome account of the breadth of evangelical ecclesiology and why it matters for contemporary evangelicals.
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Introduction
A New Era? 9/11 and the Church’s Response

On September 11, 2001, more than 3,000 lives were lost in attacks that were carried out by terrorists who hijacked planes and flew them into the Pentagon and the World Trade Center towers.¹ In the aftermath of the event, which has often been labelled the beginning of the 21ˢᵗ century, there has been a constant discussion in North America around the rise of Islamism and Islamophobia. “The years since 2001,” concludes historian Thomas Kidd, “have seen a great increase of fascination in America about Islam, and nowhere more so than among conservative American Protestants.”² Evangelicals have called for everything from aggressive reactions of state and even vigilante violence toward Muslims and Muslim-majority countries, to educational efforts to understand the Islamic faith better, to an uptick in missions (domestic and foreign) aimed at converting Muslims to the Christian faith, and more.³ In a 2005 Pew Research Center poll, evangelicals were the subset of Christians most likely to hold a negative opinion of Islam and Muslims, and they have been the most eager to flood the publishing world with books punctuated with anti-Islamic rhetoric.⁴ The new nativist rhetoric against Muslims is a well-told story that is laden with religious overtones articulated by then-President George W. Bush and his

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¹ There was an additional plane that crashed in Shanksville, PA, that had been hijacked by Al-Qaeda operatives. The intended target of the plane is thought to have been the White House or the Capitol Building.
³ For a careful analysis of many of the most prominent works by evangelicals, see ibid., chapter 8.
⁴ The Pew Research Center poll data is summarized by ibid., 162–63. For a few prominent examples of the evangelical publishing effort, see Ergun Mehmet Caner and Emir Fethi Caner, Unveiling Islam: An Insider’s Look at Muslim Life and Beliefs (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2009); R.C. Sproul and Abdul Saleeb, Dark Side of Islam (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2003); John MacArthur, Terrorism, Jihad, and the Bible: A Response to the Terrorist Attacks (Nashville, TN: W Publishing Group, 2001). There have been a few well-known moderate responses as well, including Timothy George, Is the Father of Jesus the God of Muhammad? (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002); Miroslav Volf, Allah: a Christian response (New York: HarperOne, 2011). Interestingly, the events of 9/11 elicited a not altogether different response from American Roman Catholics. The spectrum from virulent anti-Islamic rhetoric to irenicism was found among Catholics in similar proportion, though the Pew Research poll showed them as holding a slightly less negative view of Islam overall.
discourse on “evil” – even going so far as to call the American mission against this evil a “crusade.”⁵

For all its unitive force upon the American people – banding them together against the faceless enemy of Islamism – the events of 9/11 and the “war on terror” have also left a strange and far more muted legacy on the religious landscape of the nation. This legacy is the continuation by evangelicals and other Americans of an anti-Catholic prejudice.⁶ Jenkins concludes that “the September [2001] massacres resulted in some remarkable tirades not against the religion of Islam but against Catholicism, though the actual Catholic linkage to the attacks was nonexistent.”⁷ At its root was the reaction toward any sort of institutional structure that appeared to constrain the freedoms of the individual or that had the potential to perpetuate such heinousness – a certain reaction toward all religious fundamentalism, as defined popularly. The popular response to 9/11 from the outspoken atheist evangelist Sam Harris, though more extreme than most, is indicative of this mixing of Islam, Islamism, and Christianity (particularly its

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⁶ Those “other Americans” have increasingly been identified as the “new” manifestation of a secular anti-Catholicism, a subset of liberal intellectuals (especially the press) in the United States who have kept alive the “last acceptable prejudice” in America. See Mark Stephen Massa, Anti-Catholicism in America: The Last Acceptable Prejudice (New York, NY: Crossroad, 2005), 193ff; John Wolfe, “Protestant–Catholic Divisions in Europe and the United States: An Historical and Comparative Perspective,” Politics, Religion & Ideology 12, no. 3 (2011): 241–56. Jenkins gives anecdotal evidence for this too, recounting an instance when he was telling colleagues of a foiled terrorist plot in the 1990s that targeted the Pope, claiming that his “liberal” academic peers only mused that “killing such an obviously pernicious figure would be a highly desirable act” (98).

⁷ Philip Jenkins, The New Anti-Catholicism: The Last Acceptable Prejudice (Oxford: OUP, 2003), 9. Jenkins uses articles published in the New York Press and San Francisco Examiner to underscore how an event with no material connection to Catholicism came to be used as an attack on the Pope, Catholic hierarchy, and Catholic social conservatism (9–10). He goes so far as to claim, “The tendency in modern popular history to idealize Islam is the necessary corollary of the anti-Catholic myth.” Ibid., 184.
Roman Catholic institutional form). Yet the equation and denigration need not come solely from religion’s cultural despisers. For example, former president Bill Clinton, in an impassioned plea against Islamophobia, tried to position the attacks of 9/11 as a kind of retaliation to the medieval crusades of the Catholic Church, concluding that, in fact, “we” started it, and by “we” he clearly meant “the Catholic Church.” The potential for abuses of power and dogmatic inflexibility in a kind of institutional fundamentalism within Roman Catholicism seemed confirmed to Americans (and especially evangelicals) a few short months after 9/11 when the Boston Globe broke the scandal of systemic cover-ups of sexual abuses that had occurred in the diocese and for which the cardinal himself seemed complicit in the lack of accountability. For American evangelicals in the 21st century, the Catholic Church appeared draconian and capable of cabal-like tendencies, lording it over the parishioners and unconcerned with external accountability. In the view of evangelicals, this rigid institutionalism and its modus operandi failed to grasp that this new post-9/11 world called for a new way of being and doing Church.

Irrespective of how different evangelicals have chosen to react to 9/11, they are largely united in their shared interpretation that it was the official confirmation that a new age has been inaugurated. This new age is described as either the post-Christendom or post-Christian era, and it considers not only the globalized multi-faith context of our world, but also the rise of the religious “nones” in the North American setting. This is the true intersection of the reactions to

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9 This account and its interpretation of Clinton’s words is taken from Jenkins, *The New Anti-Catholicism: The Last Acceptable Prejudice*, 184. Jenkins’s follow-up point is that Americans have gone to lengths to separate Islamism from individual Muslims, but the same courtesy has not been extended to Catholics and the wrongs done by some within the Catholic Church (191).
11 James Emery White, *The Rise of the Nones: Understanding and Reaching the Religiously Unaffiliated* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2014). The “nones” are the religiously unaffiliated. The name arises from the 2008 American Religious Identification Survey (ARIS) that asked polled individuals to select their religion and gave
9/11 by evangelicals – the shared understanding that this is something wholly new. Though this post-Christian context has led to increased cooperation between evangelicals and Catholics on social and ethical issues, it has also served to heighten and exacerbate just the form of anti-Catholicism that Jenkins notes in response to the attacks of 9/11. That is, 9/11 confirmed that we live in a globalized and post-Christian world, and the assumed, enduring institutional fundamentalism and inflexible hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church cannot be a faithful response to such a changed context. Instead, what is needed is something new: a new understanding of what the Church is, a new way it is called to interact with the surrounding culture, a new way to organize itself in light of the old Scriptures and the promises of the eschaton, and finally, a new way to find the Church within the history of the world. It is within the context of evangelicals’ search for the new that this study will proceed, examining whether 21st-century evangelicals have succeeded in finding a new way of being and doing Church.

But has anything new really unfolded in the realm of evangelical ecclesiology? How might we test whether evangelicals are doing or being Church differently in the post-9/11 context, as they presume they are? And why would that matter? One way forward is to examine arguably the most formative period of American evangelical identity, the antebellum era, and compare it to contemporary evangelical trends. To unpack this theological exploration of the

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11 Agreements such as Evangelicals and Catholics Together and the Manhattan Declaration are two key examples in the late 20th- and early 21st-century context respectively.

12 See two popular periodization schemas that seek to call the church to re-envision itself in light of this (so interpreted) radically new context: James Emery White, Meet Generation Z: Understanding and Reaching the New Post-Christian World (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2017); Phyllis Tickle, The Great Emergence: How Christianity Is Changing and Why (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2008); Phyllis Tickle, Emergence Christianity: What It Is, Where It Is Going, and Why It Matters (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2012). White uses the mid-20th-century work of Christopher Dawson, who proposed the six ages of Christendom, and posits that we are now in the seventh age of the Church, marked by being post-Christian and the rise of the “nones.” Tickle, on the other hand, has broken the history of the Church into 500-year periods, at the end of which a cataclysmic shift occurs. She has proposed that the 21st century – and specifically the events of 9/11 – have induced a new manifestation of the Church which she refers to as the “emergence.” Neither of these proposals are examined in the chapter below, but they underscore the sensationalized side of this interpretation of history from two very different evangelicals.
ways evangelicals viewed the Church in the early 19th century, an historical event will be employed as a focal point, helping to avoid abstraction. The events of the 1844 Bible Riots in Philadelphia will keep this historical study contextually rooted and thematically tied to the ecclesiological categories that mattered. It is not difficult to draw parallels, no matter how cursory, between the 1844 Bible Riots and 9/11, with the inability to disentangle the religious and political aspects of the events, the acerbic rhetoric, and the death and violence that shocked the nation. The two events need not be direct parallels, but they serve the broader goal of cross-century ecclesiological examination by opening the appropriate windows of exploration.

**Antebellum America and the Bible Riots**

By 1833 the last remaining American state church (Massachusetts) was disestablished. Without any official state-sponsored churches, there arose an even greater cacophony of ambitious religious voices, intent on finding a sympathetic audience in the wave of voluntaristic euphoria. As Protestant groups adjusted to the new market economy of souls, aggressively advertising their brand of church product, they often shirked old allegiances for new ones. Jon Butler has concluded that “No other turning point has proven so consequential for so many aspects of American religion.” Despite this era of free-market disestablishment, the new

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15 I will follow the orthographic distinction of “Church” and “church” or “churches.” The former refers to the essence of the Church in its universal sense – both visible and invisible. The lower-case usages refer to congregations and instantiations of the “Church” as they appear in history, unless they are part of a proper denominational title. Complicating the matter is the reality that the quotations from other authors used throughout do not necessarily follow this convention, particularly the historical sections focused on Campbell, Hodge, and Nevin. There appears to be very little consistency or logic to the choice of “Church” or “church” (just as with “Christianity” and “christianity”) for the 19th-century thinkers, though Hodge seems to follow closest to the rationale described above. Additionally, there are instances where that rationale is disputable and legitimate arguments can be made for either usage or different criteria altogether. I have done my best to remain consistent throughout.

American Republic consistently mingled its religious and political interests, creating an ideological synthesis that operated broadly and almost unconsciously. Nathan Hatch notes that in this era American theology, particularly the exploding evangelical brand of Protestant Christianity, became something markedly different from its European counterparts. Richard Carwardine concludes that in the antebellum era, “Evangelicals, then, saw the American republic standing at a crossroads.” Beginning especially in the 1830s, in the heart of the Second Great Awakening, as the various Protestant groups adapted, changed, grew, reformed, restored, died, united, revived, and morphed into a patchwork unimaginable only a half-century earlier, a great many of them found commonality in one thing: anti-Catholic sentiments. Robert Baird, a Presbyterian minister and the first indigenous historian of American Christianity, records in his partisan *Religion in America* in 1844 that

> While such is the prevailing respect and regard for each other among the members of our evangelical churches, they all unite in opposing, on the one hand, the errors of Rome, and, on the other, the heresy that denies the proper divinity and atonement of Christ, together with those other aberrations from the true Gospel which that heresy involves [which Baird labels as the “unevangelical churches”].


Later that year the anti-Catholic, anti-immigration rhetoric was spilling over into more than words. Following a controversy first involving a Catholic bishop in New York and then another in Philadelphia,²² the tensions reached a fevered pitch when a debate over the Bible translations read in public schools could not be resolved in Kensington, a suburb of Philadelphia, and one Catholic board member attempted to stop school Bible reading altogether.

By May and again in July of 1844, in the city of brotherly love, riots erupted between Protestant nativists and predominantly Irish Catholic mobs.²³ When the violence finally subsided, two Catholic churches, two rectories, a schoolhouse, and dozens of houses were razed along with numerous lives lost (~30) or crippled (100+). The Philadelphia Nativist Riots, or simply the Bible Riots of 1844, shocked a fledgling nation that was brimming with optimism; and they left the city with a quarter of a million dollars in damage.²⁴ They were, in many ways, a particularly disorienting episode for the fervent evangelical Protestants who had strong political and religious affinities with the anti-Catholic cause, but were stunned by the lawless depths to which the nativist groups would stoop.²⁵ Some historians have argued that religious tensions

²² It must be acknowledged here that the three fastest growing and emerging centres of Catholic power in America during the antebellum era were New York, Philadelphia, and Cincinnati. Each of these bishops play a role in this dissertation, as Hughes (New York) and Kenrick (Philadelphia) were at the heart of the Bible Riots, and Purcell (Cincinnati) was Campbell’s debate partner in 1837. See William M. Shea, _The Lion and the Lamb: Evangelicals and Catholics in America_ (New York: OUP, 2004), 203.
²⁵ This is not to suggest that all evangelicals were surprised by the riots that left the city in shambles. The so-called “Beecherite Synthesis” – named after the prominent evangelical President of Lane Seminary in Cincinnati – fused “traditional, theological, and Enlightenment anti-Catholicism with nativism and evangelical impulses” that resulted in aggressive and often violent manifestations. See John C. Pinheiro, _Missionaries of Republicanism: A Religious History of the Mexican-American War_ (New York: OUP, 2014), chapter 1. A strong example of the paradox, however, was Bishop Kenrick’s diary confession that he feared so dearly for his own safety that he considered seeking refuge with Rev. Dr. Stephen Tyng, a leader of the evangelical wing of the Episcopal Church and opponent of Catholicism, but who in no way supported the riots. Francis E. Tourscher O.S.A., trans., _Diary and Visitation Record of the Rt. Rev. Francis Patrick Kenrick_ (Lancaster, PA, 1916) as found in Raymond H. Schmandt, ed., “A Selection of Sources Dealing with the Nativist Riots of 1844,” _Records of the American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia_ 80, no. 2–3 (1969): 104.
played a minor role in the riots, with the Bible only having symbolic value. More recent historiographic conclusions have moved in the opposite direction, not only emphasizing the religious dimensions of the conflict, but also widening them beyond the “Irish Catholic” subset. Downplaying the ethnic dimensions altogether, they address more fully the role – both symbolic and substantial – that the Bible and religious difference played in the clash. As Carwardine concludes, “It is only too easy to understress the religious dimension of the conflict between Protestant evangelical and Catholic, and to explain those tensions in terms of xenophobic, ethnic rivalries and concerns about status.”

**Thesis**

This dissertation will test the cumulative theories of Nathan Hatch and Mark Noll as they relate to the development of American theology. These collective historiographical theories claim that a unique brand of evangelical Protestant was raised to prominence in the crucible of the antebellum period and that this form of Protestantism remains recognizable in contemporary American religion. This, of course, is a testable claim that will be examined not comprehensively, but from one specific angle of one narrow theological aspect. Hatch’s primary claim is that in the early national period a radical democratizing transition occurred. This evangelical surge, readily apparent by 1845, left an indelible mark on the ecclesial makeup and

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29 They are not alone in these claims, but their works are considered the most standard and comprehensive, respectively. For another recent comprehensive example, see E. Brooks Holifield, *Theology in America: Christian Thought from the Age of the Puritans to the Civil War* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003).
theology of American Christianity.\textsuperscript{30} Noll too affirms this shift,\textsuperscript{31} insisting that this democratizing impulse has endured in American Christianity because of a unique “Republican synthesis” manifested in this era.\textsuperscript{32} “By the early nineteenth century,” claims Noll ironically, “evangelicalism was the unofficially established religion in a nation that had forsworn religious establishments.”\textsuperscript{33} In fact, in an essay on the “distinctiveness” of American Christianity, Noll relies on and affirms the assessment of several foreigner scholars who all direct their research to influences felt between the Revolution and the Civil war.\textsuperscript{34}

This dissertation will offer evidence that the peculiar ecclesiological contest that manifested itself among American antebellum evangelical theologians remains intact and ongoing within the evangelical landscape of the 21\textsuperscript{st} century. Since the amount of relevant material precludes a comprehensive historical connection of the theology of these two eras, this project will involve the creation of an antebellum typology that will in turn be compared with contemporary sources. The typology will be constructed from the work of three representative evangelical Protestant theologians of the antebellum period (Alexander Campbell, Charles Hodge, and John Williamson Nevin), formed through an examination of their ecclesiology. This

\textsuperscript{30} Hatch, The Democratization of American Christianity, 5–6. He also notes in an Appendix that Gordon S. Wood and W. R. Ward have also made similar claims about the crucial nature of the American Early-National period (220). Although this work focuses slightly later than the period Ward and Wood identify (1790-1830), it examines what is inevitably the final result of that era (1830-1866). Hatch also specifically identifies Campbell as a worthy object of study from this time as a key influencer in the reshaping of American theology.

\textsuperscript{31} He writes, “Nathan Hatch’s compelling account of Christian democratization is the best statement of the deep changes that took place as the churches embarked upon the task of internalizing the Revolution.” Noll, America’s God, 191.

\textsuperscript{32} Noll is careful to nuance his term “republican” and even provides an appendix to trace the historiographical disputes about this term: see ibid., 447ff.

\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., 208. For a more sustained argument, see David Sehat, The Myth of American Religious Freedom (New York: OUP, 2011).

\textsuperscript{34} Noll prefers “distinctive” rather than “exceptional” with regard to American Christianity: Mark A. Noll, “What is ‘American’ about Christianity in the United States,” in American Christianities: A History of Dominance and Diversity, ed. Catherine A. Brekus and W. Clark Gilpin (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 382ff. It is fascinating that when the counter-argument emerges that there are areas of the world where Christianity appears to be very “American” in its manifestation, Noll concludes, “To the extent that these conditions have developed, it is not surprising that styles of Christianity that flourished in North America’s competitive, market-oriented, rapidly changing, and initiative-rewarding environment would also flourish when other environments begin to look more like nineteenth-century America than fifteenth-century Europe,” 393.
antebellum ecclesiological typology will be the basis of comparison with three evangelical ecclesiological movements within the 21st century: Missional Church (MC), The Gospel Coalition (TGC), and Federal Vision (FV) theology. This project is a test-case, as it were, analyzing the implications of the theses of Noll, Hatch, and others who find the distinctiveness of contemporary American theology rooted in 19th-century dynamics.

The first two chapters will explore the ecclesiologies of Campbell, Hodge, and Nevin and will culminate with a descriptive typology at the beginning of chapter 3. The first of these historical chapters will address practical, contextual, and tangible ecclesiological issues by examining how the Bible, views of the eschaton, and organizational strategies informed the various types. The second of the historical chapters is more abstract, with sections exploring the Trinitarian foundation of the Church and the visible and invisible Church. Chapter 3 will create an ecclesial typology from the material of chapters 1 and 2. It will then explore contemporary ecclesiology as visible in the MC movement, the ecclesiological writings of members of the TGC, and the works broadly considered part of the FV theology.

The 150-year spread between the two eras of evangelical ecclesiology under investigation may give the appearance of an arbitrary comparison. However, this dissertation contends that the episode of the 1844 Bible Riots brings into acute focus similar issues that impinge upon contemporary theology: the privatization of religious beliefs and the pluralism of America; the incendiary nature of religious conflict and disagreement; issues of religious authority, particularly pertaining to the Bible; and the perennial struggle to faithfully engage a historic faith within a changing culture and world. These were the issues that Campbell, Hodge, and Nevin faced; and despite staying within the broad 19th-century evangelical world, they disagreed vociferously and charted diverging paths.
The historical investigation and contemporary comparison here are not comprehensive, nor do they make sweeping historical claims about direct inheritance. Rather, this dissertation claims that despite the years between, the ecclesiologies of these three 19th-century Americans of Presbyterian heritage are remarkably similar to three popular evangelical ecclesiological schools of the 21st century. This is a conclusion that historians like Hatch and Noll have long implied, but for which very little concrete theological analysis has been offered as evidence.

**Historical Background**

Not only were Alexander Campbell, Charles Hodge, and John Williamson Nevin alive through roughly the same time period, but they also shared a unique set of nurturing characteristics: all were of Scotch-Irish heritage, all were brought up in conservative, pietistic Presbyterian families, all rejected the extreme revivalistic practices of the Second Great Awakening, all had lived in Pennsylvania for a time (with Hodge and Nevin having significant connections to Philadelphia), and all had been formally schooled in Scottish Common Sense philosophy. The early foundational similarities make their later ecclesiological divergences even more marked as the country shifted from the Colonial to the antebellum (National Era) and then the postbellum (Gilded Age) era.

From the time that Campbell arrived in America from Ireland (via Scotland) in 1809, he moved steadily away from the (anti-Burgher, Seceder) Presbyterianism of his youth. In concert with his father, Thomas, he gathered a small following of “Disciples” which would eventually grow to a significant movement – particularly in the middle and western states – in the National period and beyond.\(^{35}\) The early Disciples found affinities with Baptists of various kinds and

\(^{35}\) The standard biography of Campbell was Richardson’s 19th-century offering; however, Wrather’s three-volume “literary biography,” on which she worked for seven decades and of which volumes 2 and 3 were published posthumously, does have new and helpful insights. Unfortunately, Wrather’s insistence that the works not contain footnotes makes them a challenge for the researcher. Robert Richardson, *Memoirs of Alexander Campbell, Embracing a View of the Origin, Progress and Principles of the Religious Reformation Which He Advocated*
attempted a reformation from within the confines of the existing Baptist denominational structures. However, after continued theological tension, Campbell reluctantly dissolved his Baptist connection and was forced to admit that his movement for unity of the Protestant denominations was now its very own movement. In the early 1830s, Campbell’s Disciples united with one of the major groups of “Christians” led by Barton Stone, located predominantly in Kentucky. The rapid growth of the Disciples and the union with the Stonite Christians gave the group a growing credibility in the antebellum period. As the unofficial but acknowledged leader of the movement, Campbell left an indelible mark on American Christianity through his resolute personality, his often acerbic writing and publishing, his untiring preaching and travel, his famous debates, and his educational efforts.36

Hodge, unlike Campbell and Nevin, remained in the Presbyterian Church for his entire life. Educated at the fledgling seminary in Princeton, NJ, Hodge was mentored intimately by the seminary’s first professor, Archibald Alexander. He began teaching at Princeton Seminary in 1820, and except for a two-year study hiatus in France and Germany, he spent the remainder of his career there, teaching Bible and then Theology to more than 3,000 students.37 Hodge is one of the most recognizable names in American theology from the 19th century. His Old School Presbyterianism always paired with a New Side piety, the combination of which molded the


Princeton Seminary ethos for his entire career.\(^{38}\) Having studied in Germany and keeping up with the “Mediating Theologians” (both personally and professionally), Hodge’s life-long resolve to contest the influence of Idealism on American theology became a divisive issue within his own denomination, but even more so in the wider context of an increasingly romanticized evangelical theology beginning in the 1830s.\(^{39}\)

The man who filled in for Hodge when he was overseas studying was Nevin, his former student. Though it seemed at times that Nevin was destined to abandon Protestantism altogether, he never did leave his second ecclesial home in the German Reformed Church.\(^{40}\) Undoubtedly, Nevin’s most productive years were the 40s and 50s as he and his colleague Philip Schaff put the tiny seminary in Mercersburg, PA, on the theological map. Influenced by the Hegelian philosophy of F. A. Rauch, his brief mentor at Mercersburg, Nevin liberally incorporated the post-Kantian Idealism and mediating theology of Germany into his own work, while always attempting to move it in a more traditional or orthodox manner.\(^{41}\) With little enduring legacy, contra Campbell and Hodge, it is a testament to the genius of Nevin’s theology that he has


\(^{40}\) As with Campbell and Hodge, there is an older 19\(^{th}\)-century biographical work (re-published in the 20\(^{th}\) century), but there is now a more recent and very helpful 21\(^{st}\)-century attempt as well. Theodore Appel, *The Life and Work of John Williamson Nevin* (Philadelphia: Reformed Church Publication House, 1889); D. G. Hart, *John Williamson Nevin: High Church Calvinist* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: P&R Pub., 2005).

\(^{41}\) John Williamson Nevin, *Antichrist: Or the Spirit of Sect and Schism* (New York: J.S. Taylor, 1848). See his explanation of what he is trying to do in the Introduction. This work was actually written as a series for *The Weekly Messenger* during the early 40s, but was compiled and edited for a book format later. It is one of his earliest defences of German philosophy in the context of American theology – a theme that would be constant over the rest of his career.
remained an important thinker in American Christianity – even if only as an exception to the theological norm.⁴²

Despite almost obsessive interest in ecclesiological themes by all three thinkers, not one of them wrote a constructive theological treatise on the topic.⁴³ All three men did, however, write extensively on the subject in their respective periodicals: Campbell in the Millennial Harbinger (and earlier in the Christian Baptist); Hodge in the ongoing iterations of the Biblical Repertory (Biblical Repertory and Theological Review and Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review); and Nevin in his Mercersburg Review (and earlier in The Friend and The Weekly Messenger of the German Reformed Church).

Further adding to the need of a study of this nature is the peculiar dearth of secondary material on the ecclesiology of these churchmen. Hodge has had the most attention given to his ecclesiology, because of his prominence and sheer volume of writing. There are two major dissertations on Hodge’s ecclesiology, with the more recent study focusing on Hodge’s response to “Catholicizing tendencies” and interacting with the Nevin and Hodge interchange.⁴⁴ There are also a handful of other works that deal with the material tangentially.⁴⁵ Perhaps the most telling

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⁴³ The exception to this statement is Hodge’s posthumously published articles and lectures, which his son and former student edited into a collected volume at his approval; see Charles Hodge, The Church and Its Polity, ed. William Durant and Archibald Alexander Hodge (London; New York: T. Nelson, 1879). Hodge even fails to devote a section in his three-volume systematics specifically to ecclesiology, as he intended to write a fourth volume entirely devoted to the subject and never executed the plan. One of Nevin’s most famous books, The Anxious Bench, is a polemic against the ecclesiology of the revivalistic practices of the evangelical churches (as is Antichrist); however, he is less constructive of his own ecclesiology than one might hope. Campbell too, although he devotes major sections in his Christian System to the order and practice of the church, spends little time on his theology of the church.


⁴⁵ Kevin Thomas Bauder, “Communion of the Saints: Antecedents of J. Gresham Machen’s Separatism in the Ecclesiology of Charles Hodge and the Princeton Theologians” (Ph.D., Dallas Theological Seminary, 2001); Joe
indicator for the lack of attention paid to Hodge’s ecclesiology is that the major symposium held at Princeton in 1997, which attempted to reappraise his work, failed to produce an essay focusing on his ecclesiology.\textsuperscript{46}

The secondary material on Nevin’s ecclesiology is not extensive, and much of it focuses on one of three areas: his anti-revival polemics;\textsuperscript{47} his so-called “catholicizing” or high-church predilection, including his patristic recovery and his sacramental and ministerial controversies;\textsuperscript{48} and his employment of German Idealism and Neoplatonic Realist philosophy in his theology of the church.\textsuperscript{49} There is also the added difficulty of tracking the evolution of Nevin’s

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ecclesiological thought from its formation at Princeton in the 10s and 20s, to the influence of Rauch and the collaboration with Schaff in the 40s, to the precipice of Catholicism in the 50s, and back to defending the German Reformed Church in the 60s and 70s.50

Campbell eschewed the title of “theologian,” but he undoubtedly deserved to be labelled one, despite his efforts to avoid all speculative thinking. His ambitious plan of uniting all Protestants in order to bring about the full reign of the Kingdom of God involved, in some measure, a restoration of the patterns of the New Testament church.51 Interestingly, two short articles compare aspects of Nevin’s ecclesiology with Campbell’s work, and yet there is no direct study on Campbell and Hodge who, it would seem, are theologically closer.52 In fact, Campbell and Nevin are used as ends of the ecclesiological continuum of antebellum evangelicals by more than one historian.53 Two other books address the topic of Campbell’s ecclesiology directly, but they are dated and in places read Campbell through their own theological agenda rather blatantly.54 The most intriguing study of Campbell that relates to this project is Keith Huey’s unpublished dissertation, titled *Alexander Campbell's Church-State*

50 See Hart’s biography for a good succinct overview of this trajectory: Hart, *John Williamson Nevin.*
Separatism as a Defining and Limiting Factor in his Anti-Catholic Activity. Unfortunately, Huey ends his study with Campbell’s 1837 debate with Bishop Purcell.55

Contemporary Comparison

Placing these theologians on a flexible continuum of types will help to emphasize the thesis of this work: 21st-century evangelical theology offers at least three movements that reflect the understandings of the church put forth in the 19th century. After outlining the ecclesiological typology, most of chapter 3 will be devoted to comparing each type with the contemporary North American evangelical categories of MC (Campbell), TGC (Hodge), and FV (Nevin).

When the Gospel and Our Culture Network of North America (GOCN) formed in the 1990s,56 the yet-to-be articulated Missional Church found a concerted and sustained champion of its ecclesiological distinctives.57 At the root of the GOCN’s work was a statement by the young missionary-bishop Lesslie Newbigin from a half-century earlier that “The New Testament knows of only one missionary society – the Church.”58 The aversion to the “growing schism between missiology and ecclesiology” which had arguably resulted in a “missionless church and a

55 Keith Brian Huey, “Alexander Campbell’s Church-State Separatism as a Defining and Limiting Factor in His Anti-Catholic Activity” (Ph.D., Marquette University, 2000). For a recent treatment of Campbell’s debate with the Bishop of Cincinnati, see Herbert Dean Miller, “Enacting Theology, Americanism, and Friendship: The 1837 Debate on Roman Catholicism between Alexander Campbell and Bishop John Purcell” (Ph.D., University of Dayton, 2015).

56 There was what they referred to as an “informal network” in the late 80s, and the first newsletter was produced in 1987. The Network gained momentum and formality beginning in 1990. See http://www.gocn.org/ (accessed January 20, 2017) for back issues of the newsletters and some brief Network resources.

57 Though the term missional can be traced back to at least the late 19th century, it was never a common term even in theological parlance. For a brief “Linguistic Archaeology” of the term, see Craig Van Gelder and Dwight J. Zscheile, The Missional Church in Perspective: Mapping Trends and Shaping the Conversation (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011), 42–46. The explosion of popularity can be traced back quite directly to the publication of Missional Church, though there were importance precursors such as Francis M. Dubose, God Who Sends: A Fresh Quest for Biblical Mission (Nashville, TN: Baptist Sunday School Board, 1983).

58 Lesslie Newbigin, The Reunion of the Church: A Defence of the South India Scheme, rev. ed. (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011), 10. In 1947, not yet 40 years old, Newbigin was made Bishop of Madurai-Ramnad in the newly formed Church of South India. Newbigin’s statement, originally in 1948, may have taken a half-century to fully mature into the driving force of the missional church movement, but it was almost a full century after Campbell had addressed the American Christian Missionary Society in October of 1860, claiming, “The Church, therefore, of right is, and ought to be, a great missionary society.” Campbell, Popular Lectures and Addresses, 561.
churchless mission” was ultimately what the GOCN picked up from Newbigin and other early adopters of this missiological ecclesiology.59

The MC movement is not the only new kid on the evangelical block. A cohort of scholars and pastors sometimes referred to as the New Reformed or New Calvinism or even the “Young, Restless, and Reformed” has found its voice in mostly Baptist, Reformed, and Presbyterian evangelical circles.60 They share a common trait with both the MC and the FV options on offer here: the self-conscious understanding that this is something new in the Anglo-American evangelical world.61 To provide some coherence to the discussion, we will examine writers who are associated with an institutional entity: The Gospel Coalition (TGC).62 TGC was founded in 2005 jointly by Tim Keller (Presbyterian) and D. A. Carson (Baptist) and has grown at an exponential rate since that time. The organization is directed by 55 Council Members, almost entirely composed of clergy and theology/Bible professors. The Coalition exists to foster cooperation, produce resources, host conferences, act as an online hub for blogs and postings,

59 Hirsch attributes this articulation to Fuller Professor Eddie Gibbs: Alan Hirsch and Dave Ferguson, On the Verge: A Journey into the Apostolic Future of the Church (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 11.
61 The “New” in “New Calvinism” primarily signifies its return to prominence and its rejection of alternative evangelical trends. It is akin to Hodge’s famous dictum “a new idea never originated in [Princeton] Seminary.”
62 Most voices will be from the “Council Members” of the Coalition (Mark Dever, Kevin DeYoung, Thabiti Anyabwile, D.A. Carson, Mike Bullmore, Bryan Chapell, and Tim Savage). Others are associated with TGC’s website (Gregg Allison and Christopher Morgan). I will also use the related voices of John Piper, R.C. Sproul, and Mark Driscoll since they are synergized with TGC. The wider net of inclusion for this type could be described as anyone associated with the “Together For the Gospel” (T4G) conferences: http://t4g.org/.

It should be noted here that Timothy Keller, one of the co-founders of TGC, is an outspoken advocate for missional ecclesiology. I chose not to use Keller in the previous section, not simply to avoid confusion but because I understand his ecclesiology to fit better here, despite his usage of “missional.” His ecclesiology is not quietistic, but when he applies the term missional it does not carry the same theological presuppositions of the nature of the Church. For a book-length treatment on “missional” in the H-C type, see Kevin DeYoung and Greg Gilbert, What Is the Mission of the Church?: Making Sense of Social Justice, Shalom, and the Great Commission (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011). Cf. Mark Driscoll and Gerry Breshears, Vintage Church: Timeless Truths and Timely Methods (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008).
publish the journal *Themelios*, and train young leaders. Though there is great diversity within the spectrum of members (even Council Members) of the Coalition, it is the central drive to promote an evangelical and broadly Reformed version of the gospel that ties it together.

Like the other two types of evangelical ecclesiology under examination, the FV theologians understand themselves to be doing a new thing by returning to something old.63 There are other voices that could have been used as test cases other than the FV – Deep Church proponents and the Ancient-Future Faith Network being two of the more prominent examples.64 FV theology is sometimes referred to as the Auburn Avenue theology because of its origins at the Auburn Avenue Pastors Conference in Monroe, LA.65 Many critics identify the controversial theology of Norman Shepherd as a major precursor to the FV; others find the New Perspective

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65 The Auburn Avenue Pastor’s Conference was held at Auburn Avenue Presbyterian Church (CREC) in Monroe, LA. The “Monroe Four” were the original four speakers at the 2002 Pastor’s Conference: Douglas Wilson, Steve Schlissel, John Barach, and J. Steven Wilkins. The Knox Theological Seminary Colloquium in 2004 was the point of no return for the formation of the FV as a theological voice: E. Calvin Beisner, ed., *The Auburn Avenue Theology Pros & Cons Debating the Federal Vision* (Fort Lauderdale, FL: Knox Theological Seminary, 2004).
on Paul (NPP) lurking in the shadows. And while both Shepherd and NPP are admitted as sources by many FV proponents, they are often seen more as cobelligerents than direct allies. Instead, members of the FV more often point to the constructive stimulus of independent biblical scholar James (Jim) Jordan. The group of FV scholars is small – there are only eleven signees of A Joint Federal Vision Profession – though a few prominent names have defended the group from a distance (at least from charges of outright heresy). All the members are self-confessedly

66 Norman Shepherd, a long-time professor of theology at Westminster Theological Seminary, was removed from his post in 1981 amid concerns of the theological direction his work had taken. For a sympathetic treatment of the Shepherd controversy, see Ian A. Hewison, Trust and Obey: Norman Shepherd & the Justification Controversy at Westminster Theological Seminary (Minneapolis, MN: NextStep Resources, 2011). Engelsma specifically traces the “root heresy” of the FV to Shepherd’s publication of The Call of Grace in 2000: David J. Engelsma, Federal Vision: Heresy at the Root (Jenison, MI: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 2012), 17ff. In one of the best summaries of accusations against the FV, Leithart writes, “Whatever the reasons, Federal Vision theology has been described as works-righteousness, covenant nomism, sacerdotalism, sacramentalism, Arminianism, Amyraldianism, Eutychianism, the road to Catholicism, Scotism, and many other things… It has been confusingly conflated with the New Perspective on Paul, and older controversies about the work of Norman Shepherd have been stirred in to add flavour”: Peter J. Leithart, The Baptized Body (Moscow, ID: Canon Press, 2007), viii. Sandlin sees four interrelated sources that have fed into the coalescing of the FV in the 21st century: the “Lordship Salvation” controversy of Charles Ryrie and Zane Hodges in the 80s; the Law and Gospel disputes among Reformed theologians, initiated by Daniel P. Fuller, also in the 80s; then the Shepherd controversy; and finally, the NPP. See P. Andrew Sandlin, “The Polemics of Articulated Rationality,” in A Faith That Is Never Alone: A Response to Westminster Seminary California, ed. P. Andrew Sandlin (La Grange, CA: Kerygma Press, 2007).


69 The document JFVP was signed in 2007 and can be found online: “A Joint Federal Vision Profession,” 2007, http://www.federal-vision.com/resources/joint_FV_Statement.pdf. Douglas Wilson, who was among the most prominent signees, has recently made an official statement that he no longer identifies with the FV: Douglas Wilson, “Federal Vision No Mas,” Blog & Mablog, January 17, 2017, https://dougwils.com/s16-theology/federal-vision-no-mas.html. Wilson, however, staunchly defends what he has previously written under the banner of FV theology and has not changed any of his views. His decision to remove himself from the label has to do with enduring “intramural” differences that are foisted upon him when the label is used. He is quoted and cited liberally throughout the section despite his recent declaration, because for the past 15 years he has been the chief ecclesiologist for the FV. Richard Gaffin and John Frame are two of the most prominent Reformed theologians who have lent support (or at least attempted to quell the animosity) to FV theology.
Reformed Christians, with denominational allegiances primarily belonging to the PCA and CREC.70 The FVers view themselves primarily as a biblical and theological renewal movement that is only secondarily seeking to catalyze an ecclesiological movement they have called “Reformed Catholicity.”71 As their name (*foedus*) suggests, the focus of the cohort is the proper understanding of “Covenant” (Old/New, Works/Grace, etc.), something that was not a significant concern for Nevin in the 19th century.72 Despite their direct rehabilitation of Nevin’s sacramental understanding, they are not “drones” (as Nevin would say) that mindlessly reproduce Mercersburg theology.

**Methods**

This dissertation is a work of historical theology. The actual way it embodies that category is admittedly unusual. Rather than approaching these three theologians in a biographical or even a broad-strokes contextual way, it will use the 1844 Bible Riots as a fulcrum to leverage various tangential themes and related events into a coherent theological dialogue. Material from Campbell, Hodge, and Nevin will be heavily concentrated in a ~30 year period from the mid-to-late-30s to the mid-60s, with 1844 acting as an epicentre.73 There are several reasons beyond the

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70 The small denomination of the Communion of Reformed Evangelical Churches (CREC) is the heartland for the group, with Douglas Wilson being instrumental in its formation and growth. The PCA, where Leithart, Mark Horne, Jeff Meyers, and Steve Wilkins have their ordination credentials, has been a much more hostile place for many FV theologians. The 34th PCA General Assembly appointed an *ad interim* committee to report on the FV (alongside the NPP), which produced a 36-page summary, 9 Declarations, and 5 Recommendations. Some members have since defended themselves against various Presbyteries who pursued the 4th Recommendation, which placed the onus on local Sessions and Presbyteries to address the controversy further.

71 Nevertheless, the similarity to Nevin’s “evangelical catholic” title is evident. Wilson has occasionally used “Protesting Catholics” as well. See Wilson, *Papa Don’t Pope: Why I’m Not a Roman Catholic (and Why the Future Is Protestant)* (Moscow, ID: Canon Press, 2016), 284 Kindle Location. The *Joint Profession* also uses the title “Reformed Catholicity”: “A Joint Federal Vision Profession.” There are differences, however, with the way the FV uses the term and the way it is used (variously) in Michael Allen and Scott Swain’s recent book: *Reformed Catholicity*.

72 Evans’ work is insightful in making some of the connections explicit. The primary one is the relationship between “union with Christ” and Covenant or Federal theology: *Imputation and Impartation: Union with Christ in American Reformed Theology* (Colorado Springs, CO: Paternoster, 2008).

73 The challenge of looking back from 1844 is that there is really very little substantial material from Nevin prior to 1840. However, both Campbell and Hodge have some important works – including Campbell’s debate with Purcell and his *Christian System* and Hodge’s *Way of Life* – that need to be considered.
tether of the Bible Riots to limit the historical timeframe: first, Campbell’s death in 1866 is an obvious marker at which comparisons can no longer be made fairly; second, it is generally accepted that Nevin’s view of the church is altered pessimistically by the war, shifting his focus from the Church to Scripture more intensely and thus creating a problem in articulating a singular coherent type,74 and third, the Presbyterian Old School–New School division of 1837 and their subsequent reunification (1869) maps onto these boundaries tidily so as not to completely rearrange Hodge’s ecclesial setting amidst the comparison. In sum, the theological shifts induced by the union of Christians and Disciples (1832), the aftermath of the Civil War (1859-65), and the reunification of the Old School–New School Presbyterians (1869) are intentionally precluded from this study to examine a manageable timeframe in an era of relative stability (despite the inherent instability of the antebellum era).

The driving motive for this historical examination is not to align a perfect comparison of the three theologians, but to flesh out an ecclesiological type from the contextual work of each thinker. This is not to say that there will be no evaluative foci, but that this is not the primary intent in seeking to understand the broad ecclesial system (to use a favourite antebellum theological term) that each promotes. Although political, social, and ethnic considerations will be addressed and acknowledged as important to the contextual theology of these thinkers, the work will take the lead from the recent historiography of the 1844 Bible Riots in locating its primary focus in the religious and theological aspects of their work.

74 See William DiPuccio, The Interior Sense of Scripture: The Sacred Hermeneutics of John W. Nevin (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1998), 106 (footnote 74). It is also true that Nevin’s most prolific era of his career is the 40s and 50s, making this the heart of the research.
A Brief Typology Apology

The creation of “Ideal Types” was a product of the late 19th- and early 20th-century work of sociologist Max Weber.75 The concept, for Weber and those who followed him, was aimed at helping the researcher move from the concrete to the abstract in a sense-making discipline: an accentuation of the typical, without a search for the statistical average or norm.76 A type is “Ideal” in the sense that it is accurate in the ideal scenario, not comprehensively representational of every contextual possibility. Furthermore, it is not the ethically “Ideal,” and it does not carry any morally evaluative connotations. Ideal Types are constructed inductively from disciplined observation and aim at describing generally the breadth of the subject matter. Types can then in turn be used in an explanatory and predictive manner with respect to ongoing social, economic, religious, or political phenomena. In short, an Ideal Type is an abstraction from the concrete specificity or actual circumstances of reality to be used as a conceptual analytical tool – a sort of “measuring rod to ascertain similarities as well as deviations in concrete cases.”77

The entire point of an Ideal Type is that it is abstracted from concrete reality, and the types are construed by one-sided accentuation.78 Just so, their heuristic function is to abstract the detailed empirical analysis and capture overriding, general features in order to produce explanatory and predictive results. Though Ideal Types were the creation of the social sciences in the modern era, they have been closely tied to religious and theological analysis from the beginning. Weber’s own work, The Protestant Ethic, was predominantly a sociological typology that addressed religion, but it directly inspired his sometime colleague Ernst Troeltsch to produce

75 Weber’s early work on types was generated out of his exchange with economist Carl Menger. See Werner J. Cahnman, Weber and Toennies: Comparative Sociology in Historical Perspective (Transaction Publishers, 2011), 49. His most enduring work built on a typology is likely The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism (London: Unwin University Books, 1930).
77 Ibid., 223.
78 Ibid.
*The Social Teachings of the Christian Church*, which articulated more clearly what has become the most famous theological typology of the 20th century: the church-sect distinction.\(^79\)

Troeltsh’s work, in turn, was first picked up in America in an enduring way by H. Richard Niebuhr, who published *The Social Sources of Denominationalism* in 1929.\(^80\) The church-sect typology has been taken up by sociologists of religion and theologians alike throughout the 20th century, being manipulated, added to, critiqued, appropriated, and reinterpreted.\(^81\) The point here is not to belabor the precedence of this particular typology in theological work, but simply to show the grist for the mill of theological inquiry that typologies can provide.

Other typologies could be explored alongside the one being proposed below – one thinks of Frei’s *Types of Christian Theology* or Lindbeck’s *Nature of Doctrine* or even Dulles’ *Models of the Church* – but perhaps the one most influentially related to the material in this work is Wolterstorff’s 1974 typology, originally pertaining to the Christian Reformed Church.\(^82\) Wolterstorff’s article outlined three types within the CRC: Pietism, Doctrinalism, and Kuyperianism. This typology was then appropriated almost *in toto* by Marsden in relation to


\(^80\) H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Social Sources of Denominationalism* (New York: Holt & Co., 1929). This was the beginning of the most enduring “school” of theologians in America, usually referred to as the Yale School. From Niebuhr to Lindbeck, Frei, and Kelsey, the usage of Weberian sociological methodology has been a hallmark of their theological repertoire.


Reformed theology in America more generally. Marsden’s introduction proved immensely influential and has, for the past two decades, been repeated and largely reaffirmed by many in the evangelical Reformed world. Two of the more serious challenges to this typology in the 21st century have not aimed at dismissing it outright, but have retained its overall validity. Hart proposed adding a fourth category of “Confessionalist” to the typology to capture conservative, orthodox Protestants who did not fit neatly into any of the ideal types; while Mouw (who was a colleague of Wolterstorff’s at Calvin in the 70s) has questioned whether Abraham Kuyper himself would have fit into the “Kuyperian” camp, or if he was truly more of a “Pietist.”

The Wolterstorff typology and its derivatives, particularly its popularizing by Marsden, has provided a rich explanatory and predictive tool for contemporary Reformed evangelicals. Yet the typology itself is insufficient for our purposes for two reasons. First, it is a narrowly Reformed typology, originally constructed from the analysis of one denomination. Conversely, our examination of Campbell and Nevin, who borrow liberally from non-Reformed sources, has pushed the bounds of that subset far beyond Wolterstorff’s intent and even further than Marsden and Mouw. Second, the typology is not an ecclesiological one, but one of personal faith expression. There certainly could be ecclesial ramifications, and the explanatory/predictive usage of the type allows for such forays; but it is strictly a typology aimed at explaining diverse expressions of individual convictions. In the end, the Wolterstorff typology does not quite cover the subset of evangelicals examined here, and its intent is aimed in a different theological direction.

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84 D. G. Hart, *The Lost Soul of American Protestantism*, Revised (London; Toronto: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004), preface; Richard J. Mouw, *Adventures in Evangelical Civility: A Lifelong Quest for Common Ground* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2016), chapter 9. Part of Mouw’s argument, reflecting back on his own work, is that he too likely fits more in the “Pietist” stream despite working for “Kuyperian” purposes most of his career.

85 See especially Marsden, “Introduction.”
This dissertation will produce its own typology with the categories of *Campbell-Missional* (C-M), *Hodge-Conventional* (H-C), and *Nevin-Retrieval* (N-R). The first designator, C-M, takes its name from Alexander Campbell as a prototype of the 21\textsuperscript{st}-century MC movement. The second type, H-C, refers to the connection between Charles Hodge in the 19\textsuperscript{th} century and TGC in the 21\textsuperscript{st} century. The final label, N-R, is a combination of John Williamson Nevin and the 21\textsuperscript{st}-century FV theologians.

**Concluding Evaluation**

What to make of a study of this nature? The conclusion of the work will build from the overall thesis that there are three types of evangelical ecclesiology which coalesced in the antebellum era and are found largely unchanged in contemporary America. What might this mean for a culture that professes to be post-Christian and in which evangelicals have repeatedly called for a new way of being and doing church? Questions of enduring institutional ambivalence and anti-Catholicism, the effects of increased denominational decline, and the rise of the religious “nones” will be touched on in light of the results of the body of the dissertation. No effort will be made to neatly wrap up these concerns, but they will bring to bear the implications of our sweeping ecclesiological examination.
Chapter 1

The great question of the age undoubtedly is that concerning the church... Where it comes to be apprehended in its true character, it can hardly fail to be of absorbing interest; nor is it possible perhaps for one who has become thus interested in it, to dismiss it again from his thoughts. Its connections are found to reach in the end, through the entire range of the Christian life. Its issues are of the most momentous nature, and solemn as eternity itself. No question can be less of merely curious or speculative interest. It is in some respects just now of all practical questions decidedly the most practical. In these circumstances, it calls for attention, earnest, and prayerful, and profound.86

Section 1

Without Note: The Role of Scripture within the Bible Riots

The Philadelphia riots of 1844 garnered the title “Bible Riots” for a simple reason – at the heart of the violent disruption was the Bible itself.87 The roots of the disturbance traced back two years to 1842 when the Philadelphia County Board of School Controllers resolved that the daily readings in the public schools ought to be conducted from the King James Version of the Bible.88 This, unsurprisingly, upset the Catholic parents of students in the schools and sent the new Philadelphia Bishop, Francis Patrick Kenrick, to petition the board for the right to choose either the Authorized Version or the Douay-Rheims version, the latter of which was an endorsed Catholic translation.89 The Board refused Kenrick’s request, though they offered what might

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87 For the clearest and most convincing defense of the religious nature of the conflicts, and especially the centrality of the Bible, see Oxx, *The Nativist Movement in America*, especially 78ff.
88 Unless otherwise noted, the narrative of the riots and the preceding conflict is woven together from primary and secondary sources. The primary sources are found in Schmandt, “A Selection of Sources Dealing with the Nativist Riots of 1844.” The secondary sources primarily used in the following are Michael Feldberg, *The Philadelphia Riots of 1844: A Study of Ethnic Conflict* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1975); Michael Feldberg, *The Turbulent Era: Riot & Disorder in Jacksonian America* (New York: OUP, 1980); Oxx, *The Nativist Movement in America*.
89 Feldberg notes that Bishop Kenrick also petitioned for teachers to have the right to choose which version they read the daily lesson from, but this cannot be confirmed. Feldberg, *The Turbulent Era*, 10. Though Billington remains the standard resource for much antebellum nativism, his account of the rise of the Riots is less careful than published narratives such as Feldberg and Oxx. For instance, Billington’s suggestions that the Controllers granted Kenrick’s request and that later a certain Controller attempted to “stop Bible reading in a local school” are slightly askew. Billington, *The Protestant Crusade, 1800-1860*, 221. Baughin notes that it was not only major centres such as New York and Philadelphia that were having these heated debates over the version of the Bible to use in schools,
appear to be a strange alternative: Catholic students could, if their consciences were perturbed by the KJV, leave the room during the readings. The drastic alternative that the Controllers suggested in response to the Bishop’s request showed just how adamantly opposed most Protestants were to the reading of the Catholic version of the Bible. But why was the alternative of an abstention from the reading more acceptable to the Controllers than multiple versions?

The answer is found not in the translation itself – at least not entirely – but in the accompanying annotation and commentary of the Scriptural text. The Douay-Rheims versions that were most commonly available in Philadelphia at the time were rather plain without images, but accompanied by sizeable explanatory footnotes. In fact, the actual resolution from the Controllers appears to deliberately prohibit the Douay-Rheims without naming it:

but even smaller centres such as Cincinnati were embroiled in controversy too: William A. Baughin, “The Development of Nativism in Cincinnati,” Cincinnati Historical Society Bulletin 22, no. 4 (October 1964): 121.

One cannot help but wonder if the resolution was a Protestant metaphor for the American nation – if you do not appreciate our Bible, then you can leave. The reality is that it was just this action that ended up spurring the riots, as a school in the Kensington suburb had Catholic students who were being disruptive leave during the readings. When the teacher (Louisa Bedford) and a Controller (Hugh Clark) suggested that readings be suspended at the school until a better resolution was found, Protestants complained that the Catholics were trying to have Bible reading outlawed in the public schools. This incited the first gathering of nativists in Kensington which led to the riotous violence. See Feldberg, The Turbulent Era, chapter 1.

All the early Catholic “Douay-Rheims” Bibles in America used one of the editions produced by Richard Challoner, an English Bishop of Debra. The reason one can be so confident that Protestants were not primarily upset about the translation itself was that Challoner’s translations were famously closer to the KJV than the original Douay or Rheims texts translated from the vulgate, something famously bemoaned by Newman: John Henry Newman, “The History of the Text of the Rheims and Douay Version of Holy Scripture,” The Rambler, New Series, I, no. II (July 1859): 145–69. Most of the Cummiskey (and Carey) editions noted below, however, used the Fifth Dublin Edition (printed by Hugh Fitzpatrick) which had several emendations made by Father Bernard MacMahon to Challoner’s text – most of which were reversions to the older Douay-Rheims translations. See Sidney K. Ohlhausen, The American Catholic Bible In the Nineteenth Century: A Catalog of English Language Editions: (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2006), 16–23.

In some copies of the octavo published by Cummiskey, however, there was an engraved frontpiece of Pharaoh’s daughter discovering the infant Moses in the bulrushes. Below the image the were words “From the Original Tongues,” which goes to show that the plate was clearly borrowed from a Protestant Bible as the Douay-Rheims translation was almost entirely done from the Latin Vulgate. The folio published by Cummiskey in 1825 used the Haydock notes which were even more extensive. See Ohlhausen, The American Catholic Bible In the Nineteenth Century, 18–20. The most common spellings of the Douay-Rheims in the 19th century were “Douia” or “Dowey” and “Rhemes.”

The printed version that Kenrick would have lobbied for would have almost certainly been produced by Eugene Cummiskey of Philadelphia, who was one of the earliest and most prolific Catholic Bible printers in America, producing ten editions 1824-58. The 1850 reprint in the Rare Book Collection of the University of Toronto includes Approbations in the front from both Bishops Kenrick and Hughes (New York). Dowey-Rhemes, trans., The Holy Bible, 1850 edition (Philadelphia: Eugene Cummiskey, 1824) Emmanuel College Rare Books Archive,
Resolved, That no children be required to attend or unite in the reading of the Bible in the Public Schools, whose parents are conscientiously opposed thereto. Resolved, That those children whose parents conscientiously prefer and desire any particular version of the Bible, without note or comment, be furnished with the same.94

The crucial phrase was “without note or comment,” which left the KJV as the only readily available English version of the Bible accepted in the public-school classroom.95 The irony was that both sides of the dispute simply wanted to read the Bible “without admixture.”96 For Catholics that meant to have a text that was bounded (literally and theologically) by their own

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94 “Address of the Catholic Lay Citizens” as found in Schmandt, “A Selection of Sources Dealing with the Nativist Riots of 1844,” 137–38. Contra David Grimsted, American Mobbing, 1828-1861: Toward Civil War (New York: OUP, 1998), 224. Grimsted is right to identify the aversion of the Controllers to the “divine word” being “encrusted with human commentary.” However, he posits that it was likely an oversight by the Controllers. It seems highly unlikely that they would add a specific prohibition against “notes” that mistakenly rules out the version under discussion; however, it is uncertain whether the Controllers were acting in the name of tolerance or if there were sinister aspirations at work (or both?). It is possible they felt the fairest course of action was to allow all Bibles without note – so as to avoid further arbitration regarding various annotated versions – or that they found a way to phrase the resolution that would prejudice the Roman Catholics without explicitly saying as much. Regardless, the point above is that the interpretive framework offered by the notes were off-limits in antebellum America.

95 There were other lesser known translations, including Campbell’s New Testament, that would have been acceptable. See Gutjahr, An American Bible.

96 This was the exact wording of the Catholic denizens who responded in print: “Address of the Catholic Lay Citizens” as found in Schmandt, “A Selection of Sources Dealing with the Nativist Riots of 1844,” 141.
tradition, while for the Protestants, that meant to be uninhibited by external commentary – without the aid of any framework or guides – no matter how basic they might have been.\textsuperscript{97}

The dispute, ultimately, was about the nature of Scripture and the Church, though the interpretation of the Bible was part and parcel.\textsuperscript{98} Was there a primacy among the two? What did it say about Scripture itself that it could (or could not) be read faithfully “without note”? In other words, it was a dispute that plunged to the heart of Protestant identity by challenging a broad evangelical consensus that the source of theological reasoning, devotional nourishment, and ecclesial formation – the Bible – was sufficiently perspicuous for the average American reader.

William Shea juxtaposes the opposing sides well, writing:

Again and again there appears the image of the individual and his Bible. Campbell’s way of seeing this contrast is stark: the Bible – freedom and hierarchy – religious and political oppression. But does the Bible need an official, communal interpreter? Of course not, Campbell would say, for the Bible is perfectly plain. And the result of Campbell’s misplaced confidence: sectarianism, denominationalism and a million popes, fragmentation of the community and spiritual anarchy, says the Catholic. And if the Bible does get an interpreter, asks the Protestant? You get Roman Catholic religious tyranny and clericalism. Tough choice. Priority of the church over the Bible is England’s, Purcell’s, Hughes’s, and Gibbons’s answer to biblical Christianity.\textsuperscript{99}

\textsuperscript{97} The irony that on May 8, 1844 – directly in the middle of the riots – Pope Gregory XVI issued an encyclical titled \textit{Inter Praecipuas} which opened with the statement, “Among the special schemes with which non-Catholics plot against the adherents of Catholic truth to turn their minds away from the faith, the biblical societies are prominent.” Continuing, he rails against their work of translation into the vernacular and ultimately his deepest concern is that “Then the biblical societies invite everyone to read [Scripture] unguided.” Without note, as it were, was not simply an American concern.

\textsuperscript{98} The \textit{North American} paper (May 21, 1844) argued that the reason Catholics wanted to use their own version is that the prelates and pope had convinced the people that the KJV was a “false version of the scriptures, a sectarian device to trap the simple”: as found in Haden, “The City of Brotherly Love and the Most Violent Religious Riots in America,” 231.

\textsuperscript{99} Shea, \textit{The Lion and the Lamb}, 287. During the debate between Campbell and Purcell, there arose a dispute about some of the content from the commentary of the Douay-Rheims version in Campbell’s possession. Purcell is adamant that the translation is not sanctioned for use and the annotations are not vetted properly (he goes so far as to suggest they are purposefully incorrect – “for the express purpose of vilifying Catholics”). The version in question is a bit of a mystery; however, since we know from the debate that it was printed in New York and supposedly in 1828, it is almost certainly an iteration printed by Fielding Lucas Jr. (in 1831, but copyrighted in 1828), despite Campbell claiming it was a Mr. Smith who produced it. In this case, it seems evident that Campbell is in the right and the notes in question do, in fact, correspond directly to the original Rheims’ New Testament (1528) as compared by Shea. See Alexander Campbell and John Baptist Purcell, \textit{A Debate on the Roman Catholic Religion: Held in the Sycamore-Street Meeting House, Cincinnati, from the 13th to the 21st of January, 1837} (New York; Cincinnati: Benziger Brothers, 1890), 334; Shea, \textit{The Lion and the Lamb}, 121.
The stark contrast might seem hyperbolic, but it was the standard view of both Protestants and Catholics of the time, as confirmed by Campbell himself in his debate with Purcell: “The first, and characteristic difference, between the Protestant and Roman Catholic, is this: the former believes the scriptures first, and the church afterwards; whereas, the latter believes the church first, and the scriptures afterwards.”¹⁰⁰ One cannot endeavor to unpack the ecclesiology of evangelicals until the source or first thing of their theological repertoire is understood more fully.¹⁰¹

**The One Best Book and the True Church**

There is no doubt that the Bible played both a symbolic and a substantive role in the ecclesiological squabbles of the antebellum period, just as it had in the incidents surrounding the Bible Riots themselves. This section will outline Campbell, Hodge, and Nevin’s understanding of the nature of the Bible and briefly touch on their hermeneutics, in order to examine the impact these had on their ecclesiology. Undergirding all their exegetical and theological work, however, were philosophical assumptions and methodological priorities. Without coming to terms with the reality that Campbell and Hodge shared a substantial philosophical framework and methodology, we would not find their divergences to be as notable or, in some cases, puzzling. And though Nevin diverged significantly by becoming one of the earliest proponents of Romantic thought in

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¹⁰⁰ Campbell and Purcell, *A Debate on the Roman Catholic Religion*, 257. The comment fails to elicit a response from Purcell.

¹⁰¹ Lannie and Diethorn attribute the 1846 resolutions of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church that met in Philadelphia regarding the “Open Bible” to the effects of the 1844 riots. The fact that Hodge was the Moderator of that Assembly would have made an interesting connection. Unfortunately, the authors mixed up the minutes for the 1839 Assembly with the 1846 one, which negates any potential “effect” that the Riots had on the 1846 gathering in Philadelphia. Vincent P. Lannie and Bernard C. Diethorn, “For the Honor and Glory of God: The Philadelphia Bible Riots of 1840,” *History of Education Quarterly* 8, no. 1 (1968): 88. The error is repeated verbatim in Tracy Fessenden, *Culture and Redemption: Religion, the Secular, and American Literature* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2007), 73.
America, he never fully purged himself of his youthful training in the Common Sense philosophy that Campbell and Hodge employed.102

Ever since “the late dean of historians of American religion,” Sydney Ahlstrom, wrote his definitive 1955 article, “Scottish Philosophy and American Theology,” the popularity of his thesis that Common Sense Realist philosophy alongside Baconian inductive methodology dominated antebellum thinking has dominated.103 There is no understanding Campbell, Hodge, and Nevin without a substantial introduction to the Common Sense-Baconian amalgam that peaked in popularity and clarity in America between 1800 and 1865. Common Sense Realist philosophy was a result of the Scottish Enlightenment, with Francis Hutcheson (1694-1746) generally labelled as its first major proponent, and Thomas Reid (1710-1796) considered to be the “founder” of the philosophy. It was the first “real school” of philosophical training in the Anglo-American world since Cambridge Platonism, and according to Dwight Bozeman was marked by a “cautious ‘scientific’ epistemology” that proved exceedingly attractive to the American audience.104

A closer look at the philosophical elements of this synthesis reveals that Common Sense Realism was largely a modification of Lockean epistemology in response to Hume’s skepticism.

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104 Bozeman, Protestants in an Age of Science, 3. Bozeman is partially relying on Rudolf Metz in his philosophical analysis of Common Sense Realism.
Whereas Locke insisted that within his empiricist epistemology there was a progression from perception to “simple ideas” in the mind to reality, the Scots were intent on removing the mediate “step” of ideas, which they considered to be too Platonic and vulnerable to skepticism. The result was that “ideas” were replaced by “judgments,” which were prior to cognition and were universally endowed in humanity (first principles). Therefore, the Realists moved directly from sense perception – verified through an a priori judgment or intuition – to understanding. The diagram below is intended to outline the significant point of distinction between the three schools of epistemology.

**Lockean Epistemology:**
Sense Perception → Ideas in the Mind → Understanding of Reality

**Humean Epistemology (Skepticism):**
Sense Perception → Ideas in the Mind → Uncertainty of the corresponding reality of “Ideas”

**Common Sense Epistemology:**
[Judgment on first principles] → Sense Perception → Understanding of Reality

Bozeman notes that the endemic pragmatism of antebellum Americans allowed Common Sense Philosophy to thrive, grounded in the “solid currency of facts” that it promised. Lacking any original American rebuttals to Hume’s skepticism, Scottish Common Sense Realist Philosophy was more than a long-distance flirtation; it became the naturalized foundation of the anti-metaphysical and anti-skeptical American project. The results promoted a belief in an intelligible world, the perspicacity of truth, and an assertion of progress, which Henry May bundled together under the label *The Didactic Enlightenment* in America.

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106 Sensation was the outward mode of the identical inward reality of perception – they deliberately did not want to distinguish between these two phenomena.

107 Holifield notes that Americans were both “repelled and fascinated” by Hume, who garnered more attention than any other philosopher during the American antebellum period: Holifield, *Theology in America*, 189.


109 Holifield, *Theology in America*, 156.

Into this context stepped the legacy of Francis Bacon, who became “Lord Bacon of America” via the crowning effusions of Reid and his cadre of Realist philosophers. With sense perceptions creating a reliable epistemological foundation, Common Sense’s methodology was constructed, brick by brick, through an inductive empiricism that became known as Baconianism. A “Baconian” – whether a scientist or layman – writes Bozeman, “was a man captivated by the ongoing spectacle of scientific advance” and who operated with a generous “presumption of competence” in approaching the natural world through inductive reasoning.

Thus, Common Sense Philosophy as found in the Didactic Enlightenment was married to the Baconian methodology of induction, creating an intellectual system that not only seemed ubiquitous in antebellum America, but was promoted as a kind of anti-system or way of viewing the world as naked nature – simply, as the way it was. So while Locke and Newton retained a place of honour in America, the former was “corrected” by Reid and the Scots, while the latter

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112 Ibid., xiii.

113 It should be noted that Common Sense Philosophy had three main realms: Ethical Common Sense, Epistemological Common Sense, and Methodological Common Sense. The first two of these will not be discussed here, while the last one will be given only in overview form. For a more in-depth look at all three, see Noll, *America’s God*, 229ff. The impact of Common Sense Philosophy was substantial upon the nascent American colleges and seminaries of antebellum America. In fact, the ideas of Hutcheson and Reid *et al.* were arguably first introduced from Scotland via John Witherspoon, making Scottish Philosophy’s centre of power the College of New Jersey. Aside from Witherspoon at the College of New Jersey, Holifield identifies David Tappan at Harvard, Timothy Dwight at Yale, and Leonard Woods at Andover. Ahlstrom agrees in general, but replaces Dwight and Woods with Nathaniel Taylor and Edwards Amasa Park, respectively, as the leading proponents of the Common Sense philosophy at their institutions. The founding of Princeton Seminary in 1812 followed suit, as Archibald Alexander’s opening term lectures set the stage for a lengthy collaboration between Common Sense Philosophy and confessional theology. Stewart claims that these lectures served as the *locus classicus* of the enduring Old School Presbyterian commitment to Scottish Common Sense tenets of epistemology. Holifield, *Theology in America*, 175; Ahlstrom, “The Scottish Philosophy and American Theology,” 261ff; John William Stewart, “The Tethered Theology: Biblical Criticism, Common Sense Philosophy, and the Princeton Theologians, 1812-1860” (Ph.D., University of Michigan, 1990), 251. For a more sustained examination of Witherspoon and his philosophical, political, and theological legacy, see Mark A. Noll, *Princeton and the Republic, 1768-1822: The Search for a Christian Enlightenment in the Era of Samuel Stanhope Smith* (Regent College Publishing, 2004), 16–58. For an excerpt of Archibald Alexander’s original 1812 lecture, see Mark A. Noll, *The Princeton Theology, 1812-1921* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1983), 61–71.
was viewed as “preeminently the apostle of Bacon.” In this way, Ahlstrom concludes, the Common Sense–Baconian synthesis became for theologians a “vast subterranean influence, a sort of water-table nourishing dogmatics in an age of increasing doubt.”

With all of this going on below the surface, scholars often overlook the fact that when Nevin pinch-hit for Hodge at Princeton, after Archibald Alexander sent the latter on a two-year field trip to Germany (1826-28) with a stern warning to imbibe all he could without becoming drunk on German learning, it was a Biblical Studies, not a Didactic Theology exchange student program. Hodge, at the time, was the Professor of Oriental and Biblical Languages at Princeton, and this was the role into which Nevin stepped to replace his former teacher who was

114 Bozeman, Proteants in an Age of Science, 27, 6. One aspect of the Baconian method that scholars and historians have often overlooked, notes Bozeman, was its inherent technique of restraint (7, 16). Undoubtedly there was optimism with regards to the knowability of the world; however, Bozeman insists that Baconians “consistently laid more stress upon the austere limits than upon the expansive possibilities of inductive research” (13-14). The questions lay not in the assurance of the method, but in the slow and steady – sluggish and methodical – piecemeal discoveries that aimed specifically at eschewing the “individualized factor of ‘genius’” or the efforts of “intellectual cleverness” (16-18). One problem with Bozeman’s thesis is that the way Baconianism was “practiced” by the non-scientist was inconsistent and the inherent restraint was not always exhibited. Bozeman may be correct in the ideal, but the actual exhibition of Baconianism was often not practiced in the ideal. Likewise, From concludes that the cultural obsession with Lord Bacon, as understood by American generalists who glossed over the intricacies of Bacon’s actual actual, was mostly a misnomer: “What passed for Baconianism was only nominally Baconian”: Joel L. From, “Antebellum Evangelicalism and the Diffusion of Providential Functionalism,” Christian Scholar’s Review 32, no. 2 (Winter 2003): 187.

115 Ahlstrom, “The Scottish Philosophy and American Theology,” 268. During the antebellum era, the Unitarian Edward Everett could claim that “the Baconian philosophy has become synonymous with the true philosophy” and the philosopher Samuel Tyler would announce that “The Baconian Philosophy is emphatically the philosophy of Protestantism [sic].” In fact, both Noll and Stewart describe Common Sense Philosophy as the lingua franca of American intellectual life in the early 19th century, while Marsden calls it the “prevailing intellectual opinion” and Bozeman notes that it “exerted master influence upon American thought.” Its highest assessment, arguably, comes from Holifield’s conclusion that “No other single philosophical movement has ever exerted as much influence on theology in America as Scottish Realism exerted on the antebellum theologians.” Everett’s assessment is found in Bozeman, Proteants in an Age of Science, 3; cf. Samuel Tyler, A Discourse of the Baconian Philosophy (Frederick City, MD: Printed by E. Hughes, 1844), 15; Mark A. Noll, “Common Sense Traditions and American Evangelical Thought,” American Quarterly 37, no. 2 (1985): 219; Stewart, “The Tethered Theology,” 244; Marsden, “Everyone’s Own Interpreter?,” 82; Bozeman, Proteants in an Age of Science, 21; Holifield, Theology in America, 175.

only slightly more than five years his senior. In fact, it was not until the year 1840 that both theologians inhabited the Chairs that they would become known for, as Hodge made the transition to Professor of Exegetical and Didactic Theology and Nevin took up his post as Professor of Theology at Mercersburg. If Hodge and his understudy, Nevin, began their academic roles in the realm of Biblical Studies and then migrated to the Theological arena later, it was not so with Campbell, who remained a lifelong populist New Testament scholar of "first rank." Campbell’s suspicion of professional theologians ran so deep that he forbade the formation of a chair in theology at Bethany College, stating, “We want no scholastic or traditionary [sic] theology.” Instead, he desired to build the curriculum entirely on the Bible, claiming, “All science, all literature, all nature, all art, all attainments shall be made tributary to the Bible and man’s ultimate temporal and eternal destiny.” Campbell’s comments in 1839, on the eve of Hodge and Nevin taking up their theology chairs and Campbell forming Bethany College, are a good place to begin this first section.

**Campbell: Pattern**

Beverly Roberts Gaventa has called salvation the “theme,” while Eugene Boring referred to it as the “focus”; but either way, they agree that the scope of the Bible, in Campbell’s

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117 Hodge began his tenure at the Seminary in 1822, but before that Hodge’s role was as an instructor in the original languages of Scripture (1820-22).

118 Nevin’s role at Western Theological Seminary in the 30s was as Professor of Biblical Literature, not in theology. However, very little of his work from the 30s has survived, so it is difficult to know exactly what he taught and what his work focused on. It should also be noted that the categorical breakdown between Biblical Studies and Theology should not be overemphasized, as these lines were purposeful but much more perforated than they became at seminaries in the 20th century.

119 Boring, *Disciples and the Bible*, 57. Boring, as others have done, probably overstates his case for Campbell as a New Testament scholar, although he readily admits it is a bit of an anachronistic title in the American antebellum period. He cites J.H. Garrison’s “thirty-two page panegyric” and notes how the famous Disciples’ scholar who studied under Campbell fails to even mention him as a New Testament scholar.

120 Alexander Campbell, “American and Foreign Bible Society,” *The Millennial Harbinger*, New Series, I, no. IX (September 1837): 448. More than two decades later, Campbell had not softened his stance, writing, “Theologies nor mythologies deserve not a chair, nor a stool, in any Seminary, or College of literature, science or art. What have we to do with the science of Pagandom or Papaldom! Their right and left are Scylla and Charybdis!” Alexander Campbell, “Bethany College,” *The Millennial Harbinger*, V, I, no. IV (April 1858): 213.
theology, was soteriological. More specifically, Boring notes that this soteriological focus was “conceived by Campbell not abstractly but institutionally, that is, ecclesiologically.” In other words, the scope of the Bible was preoccupied with the salvation of the world and how the living Church was to enact and embody that reality. This direct relationship between the Bible and the Church sets Campbell apart from both Hodge and Nevin and helps explain some of the most unique parts of his ecclesiology. This section will begin by taking up Campbell’s understanding of the nature of Scripture, move to how it was used in Campbell’s theology, and conclude by examining the ecclesiological and soteriological scope of Scripture.

In an address given to an audience in Louisville, titled “The Amelioration of the Social State,” Campbell lays out the soteriological telos of Scripture as clearly as he ever did: “The speaker is God; the hearer, man; the subject, human nature, human relations, human destiny; the object, eternal life, immortal glory.” That this description of the Bible occurred in the midst of an address on what later Christians might call “social justice” is peculiar only when it is taken out of its historical context. After all, “The One Best Book,” as Campbell called the Bible, is “the fountain and source of light and life, spiritual and eternal.” The Bible, with God as its speaker, was undoubtedly a “Divine Book” that contained the very “vocabulary of heaven.”

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122 Boring, *Disciples and the Bible*, 68.

123 Campbell, *Popular Lectures and Addresses*, 68. Italics original. Another similar construction that Campbell used more than once was, “God has spoken by men, to men, for men”: Alexander Campbell, *A Connected View of the Principles and Rules by Which the Living Oracles May Be Intelligibly and Certainly Interpreted* (Bethany, Va.: M’Vay and Ewing, 1835), 22, 30.


125 Campbell, *Popular Lectures and Addresses*, 68.

126 Campbell, *Christianity Restored*, 126. Boring is correct to nuance this by claiming Campbell saw the Bible as both “like and unlike” other books as it contained a mixed economy of “supernatural truths and historical facts,” with the former being revelation and the latter being completely original to the human author: Boring, *Disciples and the Bible*, 80, 62. However, Campbell was rarely so discriminate with his words and generally preferred more sweeping descriptions of the nature of the Bible, always insisting on its unity or “oneness.” A prominent example of his more finely distinguished articulation of the nature of the Bible is when he dismisses
existence as a source of truth was so comprehensive in Campbell’s view that, “There is not a
spiritual idea in the whole human race, that is not drawn from the Bible. As soon will the
philosopher find an independent sunbeam in nature, as the theologian a spiritual conception in
man independent” of the Bible. With the Bible as the perfect and full revelation of God to
humanity, Campbell believed there was a comprehensiveness to Scripture that precluded a theory
of development or progressive knowledge of God or his salvation narrative. In other words, it
was all given within the facts of Scripture. There was no germ theory of organic development
as Nevin so repeatedly insisted upon, and no later authorized revelation as the Mormons claimed,
for the speaker of the Bible had laid it all out for the hearer, who needed only to be a logical,
diligent, and pious reader of the divine vocabulary. For Campbell, the nature of Scripture as
the Word of God set the tone for its content, its interpretation, and its application.

Elder Spencer H. Cone’s claim that “every jot and tittle… is [a part of the Bible’s] plenary and verbal inspiration,”
Campbell argues that this is “ultraism” while maintaining that the Bible is “inspired… but not every jot and tittle”: Campbell, “American and Foreign Bible Society,” 397. See also Campbell, “Power of the Scriptures,” The Millennial Harbinger, V, VII, no. II (February 1864): 79; Donald Henderson, “Alexander Campbell on the Bible,” Stone-Campbell Journal 9, no. 1 (March 1, 2006): 3–17.


128 In one of his more direct conclusions, Campbell writes, “Our whole religion, objectively and doctrinally
considered, is found in a book… All that can now be pretended or aimed at, by any sane mind, is the proper
interpretation of what is written in Hebrew and Greek and translated into all the modern languages in the civilized
world. Whatever in Christianity is new is not true. Whatever is true is contained in the commonly received and
acknowledged books our Old and New Testaments, or covenants. Philology, and not philosophy; history, and not
fable; reason, and not imagination; common sense, and not genius, are essential to the perception, and candor and
honesty, to the reception of the gospel of Christ and its spiritual privileges and honors.” Campbell, “Anecdotes,

129 “Facts” here is being used in the Campbellian sense of “sayings or doings, things said or done, precepts,
promises, or threatenings.” Facts are historical realities more than abstract propositional truths: Campbell, “Bethany
College,” 214. See also Ronald E. Osborn, ed., The Reformation of Tradition (Renewal of the Church: The Panel of
Scholars Reports), vol. 1 (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1963), 45.

130 It is true that Campbell had a “progressive” view of revelation, which will be outlined in the section
below as having to do with his usage of Covenantal Theology. There was a progression of revelation from age to
age, but not within the ages themselves. As the Christian age was the final dispensation before the Kingdom of God,
no further progression of revelation was needed. Hiram Lester, “Alexander Campbell’s Millennial Program,”
Discipliana 48, no. 3 (Fall 1988): 36. While Campbell was a rationalist who abhorred the excesses of “enthusiasm”
and revival techniques, he still saw a great deal of importance in the piety of the reader of Scripture. The more
genuine the faith of the reader, the better they were able to understand the words of Scripture. Campbell talks of the
faith of the believer aiding them in narrowing the “understanding distance” in the hermeneutical task. See especially
If the *speaker* was God, then it seemed logical enough that there would be an audience beyond God’s triune self.131 The *hearer*, as humankind, is of particular importance to Campbell because it also implied something about the nature of Scripture. According to Campbell, if God chose to direct God’s-speech toward humankind, then it must be intelligible to the *hearer*, or else the claim that the Bible is revelation is oxymoronic:

[For] when God spoke to man in his own language, he spoke as one person converses with another, in the fair, stipulated, and well established meaning of the terms. This is essential to its character as a revelation from God; otherwise it would be no revelation, but would always require a class of inspired men to unfold and reveal its true sense to mankind.132

This was the motivation for Campbell’s own translation work and his preoccupation with Bible Unions/Societies and other independent translations of the Scriptures – to ensure the revelation of the Bible, given by its *speaker*, could be received accurately and intelligibly by its *hearers*.133

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131 It has long been debated how developed Campbell’s Trinitarian theology was. Carter’s dissertation and subsequent pared-down book are the definitive sources on the peculiarities but also the orthodoxy of Campbell’s position: Kelly D. Carter, “The Trinity in the Stone-Campbell Movement: Historical/Theological Analysis and Constructive Proposal” (Ph.D., SMU, 2012); Kelly Carter, The Trinity in the Stone-Campbell Movement: Restoring the Heart of Christian Faith, (Abilene, TX: Leafwood Publishers & ACU Press, 2015).

132 Campbell, The Christian System, 15–16. Cf. Campbell, “Bethany College,” 212. As is clear from this quote, Campbell dismissed outright the Calvinist teaching that the Holy Spirit must illumine the reader of Scripture. His rejection of the doctrine of illumination led to acrimonious divisions with many Baptists and serious and sustained attacks on his pneumatology for the rest of his life; many disputes remain today with regard to his “real” position on the subject and its contemporary significance. This is not to say that the Holy Spirit is not involved in reading and interpreting Scripture, but Campbell believed the Spirit inhabited the Scriptures and did not act upon the reader apart from the Scriptures. See Robert C. Kurka, “The Role of the Holy Spirit in Conversion,” in Evangelicalism & the Stone-Campbell Movement, ed. William R. Baker (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2002), 138–51.

133 The index of the *MH* notes that there are 114 separate discussions of versions of the Bible during Campbell’s tenure as editor of the journal. That means – averaged out over the twenty-five years – that there was a mention of a Bible version in nearly 40% of the issues or 4.5 mentions each year. These mentions were often full articles reviewing a new version or in defense of his own version. For instance, in 1833-34 Campbell wrote a 10-part defense of his translation after it was attacked in The Episcopal Recorder. Campbell’s translation of the New Testament, titled the Living Oracles (1826), was only the third American version published after Charles Thomson’s in 1808 and the Universalist Abner Kneeland’s in 1823: Gutjahr, An American Bible, 193. Gutjahr’s fascinating study of Bible translation and printing in early America highlights just how important the Bible was during this era. His Appendices show that the 1840s was the peak of Protestant Bible production (both editions and printings) during the century (181ff). Interestingly, it was during the 1850s that Catholic Bibles peaked in production, a fact which appears to be tied directly to the translation work of Bishop Kenrick who was the Bishop of Philadelphia during the Bible Riots. Prior to Kenrick’s work, it was Bishop Hughes of New York – the other prelate involved in the Bible Riot episode – who led the American Catholics by reprinting the Douay-Rheims version in the 40s, “with the Approbation of the Rt Revd Dr Hughes Bishop of New York” (128ff).
Faithful and readable translations for the laymen were of “paramount” and “transcendent” importance to the object of Scripture, claimed Campbell.\(^{134}\)

Reflecting on his own translation, Campbell claims, “We are assured that more depends upon a perspicuous and correct translation of the New Testament, for the illumination of the christian [sic] community, and for the conversion of the world, than upon any other means in human power.”\(^{135}\) He felt that this divine book was “adapted to man as he is now”\(^{136}\) and that, therefore, it contained infinite benefit not only to the individual who sought salvation, but also to the “true church of Christ” as it sought to “know the whole truth – the mind and will of God.”\(^{137}\) The hearers of the Bible were actually two different (though overlapping) audiences: first, the individuals who sought salvation, desiring to know what they must do to gain eternal life; and second, the Church as divided communities of disciples who desperately needed the “unction of heaven-descended truth” in order to “heal the wounds of sectarianism.”\(^{138}\)

The Bible was clearly an intensely practical book for Campbell. Notice that the subject of the Bible was actually the hearer and not the speaker of Scripture: “human nature, human relations, human destiny,” or as he says in another place, “on man as he was, on man as he is, on man as he will hereafter be.”\(^{139}\) This subject of Scripture, however, was not a generic self-help manual, but instead took on an extremely particular “constitutional” shape as a collective vision.

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136 Campbell, *The Christian System*, 15. Unlike the biblical scholars of Germany or the later Anglo-American cadre of higher critics, Campbell thought the Bible should be read like any other book because it was a divine book (not because it was a book of the same nature as other books). Part of its divine power, according to Campbell, was the fact that it deigned to be understood on a fully human level. The term he often used was to read “without prejudice”: Campbell, *Popular Lectures and Addresses*, 68.

137 Campbell, *Popular Lectures and Addresses*, 570.

138 Ibid.

of humanity.\textsuperscript{140} It is impossible to understand the connection between the Bible and the Church in Campbell without delving into this constitutional shaping of Scripture. The subject of the Biblical text, as a constitution, was represented through a series of covenants that showed Campbell’s indebtedness to, as well as his clear divergence from, the federal theology of Westminster.\textsuperscript{141} Unlike Hodge, who in many ways was the federal theologian \textit{par excellence} in America at the time,\textsuperscript{142} Campbell divided history into three ages instead of two: Patriarchal (Family), Jewish (National), and Christian (Ecumenical) or, as he sometimes tellingly referred to them, Starlight, Moonlight, and Sunlight.\textsuperscript{143} These epochal divisions allowed Campbell to dissect Scripture into smaller constitutions that were applicable to certain ages of world history.

The Christian age, therefore, took as its constitution the portion of Scripture from Christ’s ascension to the Second Coming, when Christ would return the keys of the Heavenly Kingdom

\textsuperscript{140} Campbell, \textit{Popular Lectures and Addresses}, 592. Campbell calls this collectivity “empire,” “kingdom,” “society,” “community.” The difficult thing for the interpreter of Campbell is that he sometimes uses these terms as direct synonyms for the Church and sometimes they have a broader understanding than the visible Church. See Mark G. Toulouse, “The Kingdom of God and Disciples of Christ,” \textit{Discipliana} 62, no. 1 (Spring 2002). For a brief look at the context of Disciples in relation to the popularity of written constitutions, see Osborn, \textit{The Renewal of Church}, 1:269–70.

\textsuperscript{141} The divergence lies primarily in his rejection of the “covenant of works” attributed to the pre-fall narratives in Genesis. Campbell sees only “covenants of grace,” which allows him to use thinkers like Johannes Cocceius generously without accepting their theology wholesale. The covenants of grace are not, however, qualitatively the same, as the Christian age has been given a “better constitution of grace – a better covenant, established upon better promises”: Campbell, \textit{Popular Lectures and Addresses}, 568. On the whole, Campbell seemed to prefer the Dutch Federalists over the more naturally akin Scottish ones because of their manner of Biblical interpretation. See Alexander Campbell, “Tracts for the People - No. VI: Covenants of Promise,” \textit{The Millennial Harbinger}, III, III, no. V (May 1846): 253–64; Boring, \textit{Disciples and the Bible}, 71; William J. Richardson, \textit{The Role of Grace in the Thought of Alexander Campbell} (Los Angeles, CA: Westwood Christian Foundation, 1991); William J. Richardson, “Covenant (Federal) Theology,” ed. Douglas A Foster et al., \textit{The Encyclopedia of the Stone-Campbell Movement} (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004).


\textsuperscript{143} Campbell, “Bethany College,” 213; Boring, \textit{Disciples and the Bible}, 65. Hodge, like most Federalists, emphasized the two ages of Adam and Christ. More will be said on this below. There is no direct correlation for Campbell between the number of covenants and the epochs of world history he distinguishes. Richardson notes that Campbell sees at least nine separate covenants in the Bible, but only divides his dispensations into three. See Richardson, “Covenant (Federal) Theology.”
to the Father. By parsing the Bible into dispensations, Campbell could restrict the obligatory biblical material – the requisite facts – for the Christian or Sunlight age to only the text of the New Testament era and specifically to Acts and the Epistles. The corollary was also true: when it came to the Christian age, the Old Testament and even the gospel material was either used as a stockroom of types or it was virtually ignored, because it was a constitution that belonged to a past dispensation and was no longer binding on the Church. For Campbell the book of Hebrews became a kind of “canon-within-the-canon-within-the-canon-within-the-canon” as it emphasized the sharp division between covenants, used the Old Testament as types of New Testament realities, and was soteriological in focus. Therefore, in general, the subject of the

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144 There are several peculiar things to note about this proposal that cannot be explained here in full. It is pertinent to note that the “Christian age” did not begin with the Incarnation, but rather with the ascension of Christ to his heavenly throne. The Church, however, is not the same as the “Kingdom of Heaven” and was not initiated until Pentecost. Also, the temporary nature of the “Christian age” is noteworthy. Campbell does not equate the Church or the “Kingdom of Heaven” with the “Kingdom of God,” as the former two end when the history of the world ends and Christ gives back the keys to the Father. Only the “Kingdom of God” endures eternally. For the most helpful and comprehensive discussion of Campbell’s different usage of “Kingdom” and their relation to the church, see Toulouse, “The Kingdom of God and Disciples of Christ.” It should be noted that Campbell did not denigrate or attempt to exclude the Old Testament from the canon of Scripture – he was no Marcionite – but he did deliberately force it to the shadowy hinterlands of his theological vision for the church. See Gaventa, “The Reconsideration of a Tradition,” 65; Stephen Sprinkle, Disciples and Theology: Understanding the Faith of a People in Covenant (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 1999), 9.

145 Campbell also had an ambivalent usage of covenantal types, unlike most Federalist theologians. For instance, he (rabidly!) rejected the correlation between circumcision and baptism, while insisting upon the typological interpretation of the “shewbread” as the loaf at the Table of the Lord. Campbell, The Christian System, 17; Humble, Campbell and Controversy, 208. Humble notes that the Campbell-Rice debate (1843), which was Campbell’s last major debate, spent some 600 pages discussing baptism, with the argument of its continuity with Old Testament circumcision being a major premise of Rice’s argument. Although Campbell insisted that all the covenants were covenants of grace, he still felt there was a qualitative difference between them: “But God has been to us much more gracious than to Israel, according to the flesh. He has given to us a better constitution of grace – a better covenant, established upon better promises.” Along with this “better constitution of grace” came an increased measure of responsibility and mission: “He has called us to a noble work, and given to us a large mission. He has committed to us the Christian oracles, with authority to announce them to the whole human race”: Campbell, Popular Lectures and Addresses, 568.

146 Boring, Disciples and the Bible, 75. According to Boring, for Campbell the New Testament was the “canon-within-the-can” and the Acts and Epistles were the “canon-within-the-can-within-the-can.”

147 Ibid., 75ff. Although Boring acknowledges the importance of Acts in Campbell’s thinking, he ultimately sees Hebrews as more central to Campbell’s theology. This, it seems to me, is a matter of emphasis, as the historical importance Campbell puts on the early church is significant. Both have their place as a canon-within-a-canon in Campbell’s thinking. One example of Campbell leaning more toward the historical-narrative emphasis of Scripture was his original translation of the New Testament foregoing the chapter and verse divisions in-text. The point was obvious that Campbell did not like the ease with which the verse designations allowed for a kind of propositional
Bible was all aspects of past, present, and future human life, and the particular scope of the Christian age was the Acts and Epistles, under the New Covenant of grace inaugurated by Christ’s ascension and reign in the Kingdom of Heaven.

The Church, then, was the very institution that the Acts-Epistles constitution upheld. Therefore, the title “Ecumenical Age” could be used interchangeably, by Campbell, with “Christian Age.” He could no more separate the Israelite Nation from the Israelite Age, than he could the Church from the Christian Age. If the Church, on the pages of Scripture as an Acts-Epistles constitution, is the subject of the Christian (Ecumenical or Sunlight) Age, then the object of Scripture is achieved when the Church is aligned perfectly with its constitutional model. This, for Campbell, resulted in an inductive reading of the Acts and Epistles as a sufficient blueprint for reuniting the living Church into one body, just as it outlined in its constitutional form.

Campbell’s theological methodology was rooted in the reasonableness and the reasoned interpretation of Scripture alone: the mutually informing realities of Scripture and Reason. The rational mind that Campbell so consistently lauded, was, on its own, merely a given structural framework that awaited the appropriate material to consume, analyze, and synthesize, and the proof-texting. Boring sees other reasons why Hebrews is at the crux of Campbell’s thinking, but they are not pertinent for this study. Cf: Henderson, “Alexander Campbell on the Bible,” 12.

148 It could be argued that the first volume of Wrather’s modern biography of Campbell is the working out of Locke’s philosophy – and especially his Reasonableness of Christianity – in the life of young Alexander, who dreamed of being a man of letters himself. Wrather, Alexander Campbell, 2005.

The loss of something like “Tradition” from this methodological framework is particularly noteworthy. It is not an outright desertion of Christian voices from the past, but a subordination of the authority of those voices in service to the ultimate authority of a reasonable interpretation of Scripture. There are several places where Campbell shows his remarkable breadth of reading. One of the more pronounced examples – pertinent here – is his argument against those who criticize his lack of attention to the Church Fathers’ “Rule of Faith.” Campbell pens an extended essay that sources Clement, Polycarp, Tertullian, Basil, Cyril, Chrysostom, Jerome, Athanasius, and Augustine (especially) where he argues against the idea of the “Rule of Faith” as a doctrinal framework or consensus. But he does not simply criticize the idea of the Rule of Faith. He suggests an alternative: the only “Rule of Faith” or “Unanimous Consent of the Fathers” is the “necessity, utility, and importance of reading sacred Scripture” (20). Alexander Campbell, “Unanimous Consent of the Fathers,” The Millennial Harbinger, New Series, I (1837): 19–23. Here Campbell also refers positively to Archbishop Tillotson’s “Rule of Faith” as supporting a similar argument. See John Tillotson and Edward Stillingfleet, The Rule of Faith: Or an Answer to the Treatise by Mr. I.S. Entitled Sure-Footing, &c. (London: Printed by A. Maxwell, 1666).
proper training to do so. A learned and intelligent person could no more reason their way to God without the Scriptures, than a trained explorer could find a treasure without a map. Yet a reasonable person, provided with a Bible, was able to read and understand the words of Scripture definitively and without the need for extensive knowledge of Church history or theology. This reasonable individual could do so, according to Campbell, by using the “Baconian system of acquiring and communicating truthful and veritable science.”

149 Hatch, “Sola Scriptura and Novus Ordo Seclorum”; Hatch, The Democratization of American Christianity. It is no surprise that Hatch uses the Christian Movement, including Campbell, as the pinnacle of the Americanized version of sola scriptura in the antebellum period. The shift from 18th-century usage of the mantra arises directly from the 19th-century American emphasis on the democratization and the privatization of the meaning of sola scriptura. Hatch’s chapter, as well as his later book, are exceedingly helpful when considering the populist evangelicals of the 19th century. However, Hatch does miss a significant aspect of Campbell’s view that colours the account: Campbell did not think the general reader of Scripture was inherently endowed with the reason and tools to properly understand Scripture. Hatch sees Campbell and others as dismantling the professional interpreters of Scriptures (clergy and teachers) in favour of a democratic reading, but in reality Campbell intended to challenge the common Christian to do the hard work of historical, philological, and even philosophical learning in order to properly read Scripture. Rather than merely tearing down the professionals, Campbell intended to build up the layman. This is not to say that Campbell never attacked the professional class’s position or that he ever believed the laity reached their potential capacity as competent readers and interpreters of the Bible. Campbell did, however, believe that the Bible could be useful for even the beginner in the faith, as it was “designed to be read and understood by persons of the humblest capacity, as well as those of the most exalted genius”: Alexander Campbell, The Sacred Writings of the Apostles and Evangelists of Jesus Christ, Commonly Styled the New Testament (St. Louis, MO: Christian Board of Publication, 1914), xii. This quote is reminiscent of one from Gregory the Great: “Perhaps I might say [Scripture] is like a river both shallow and deep, in which a lamb walks and an elephant swims”: Pope Gregory, Gregory the Great: Moral Reflections on the Book of Job, trans. Brian Kerns (Collegetown, MN: Liturgical Press, 2014), 53. For Campbell’s brand of rationalism, see John Morrison, “A Rational Voice Crying in an Emotional Wilderness,” in The Stone-Campbell Movement: An International Religious Tradition, ed. Michael W Casey and Douglas A Foster (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2002).

150 Campbell is no two-book Baconian, unlike many of the other evangelical Christian thinkers of the era in America (and England) who used the Common Sense Realist framework and inductive methodology to tirelessly seek “evidences” from the natural world. The greatest of these was undoubtedly Paley, but there were other very popular efforts on both sides of the Atlantic. For a recently published version of Paley’s famous work from 1794, see William Paley, A View of the Evidences of Christianity (New York: CUP, 2009). For a more in-depth discussion of these evangelicals, see Herbert Hovenkamp, Science and Religion in America, 1800-1860 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1978); Bozeman, Protestants in an Age of Science; Walter H. Conser, God and the Natural World: Religion and Science in Antebellum America (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1993).

151 Michael W. Casey, The Battle over Hermeneutics in the Stone-Campbell Movement, 1800-1870 (Lewiston, N.Y.: E. Mellen Press, 1998), 49. Casey calls both Thomas and Alexander “conservative rational empiricist[s]” or “conservative Lockeans,” but he insists that in general they were eclectic and pragmatic in their philosophical predilections. In other words, they followed the general conservative approaches of the day, but were not rigid followers of one definitive school.

152 Campbell, “Bethany College,” 211. While on the whole Nugent appears correct in challenging the conception of Campbell as an “enslaved” Baconian, I think he misses the more important reality that “Baconianism” had come to stand for something different in the antebellum period (as opposed to Bacon’s own philosophy of science) and Campbell was, indeed, a self-proclaimed leading proponent of that school: “We are in science and
inductive methodology was, at its core, a democratizing impulse aimed at putting the Bible back into the hands of the laity and teaching them how to read and understand the subject of the text in order to gain its object.\textsuperscript{153}

In sum, Campbell’s well-documented efforts to restore the New Testament Church were based on a regulative understanding of the Bible and a reading of the Acts and Epistles as the constitution of the institution of salvation: the one, united Church. Boring is accurate, however, that any attempt to replicate the apostolic Church in all its detailed minutiae was “epiphenomenal” of the more fundamental theological assumptions that Campbell held about the Bible and its place in the economy of salvation. This is not, in any way, to claim that the pattern-restoration reading of the Bible was merely incidental and overall unimportant to Campbell, but only to show that it was built on a larger theological foundation.\textsuperscript{154} Although Campbell would have likely never admitted to it, the entire schema is built largely on a deductive syllogism. The Bible is a divine word for salvation; the united Church in the Acts and Epistles is the crux of the Bible; therefore, the united Church of the Acts-Epistles is for salvation.\textsuperscript{155} The united Church, as

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\textsuperscript{153} Sprinkle, \textit{Disciples and Theology}, 24. Much more could be said about Campbell’s hermeneutics, but the pertinent addition to this study is the democratizing rationale for his chosen methodology.

\textsuperscript{154} By “pattern-restoration” I am referring to the model of restorationism that is more often found in the Stone-Campbell Movement after the first generation, which attempted to delineate the exact parameters of the Church by extracting “patterns” or “precedents” from the Acts-Epistles constitution. It is not misplaced to see this patternism as practiced by Campbell, but when dislocated from its wider theological context it loses its proper rationale. This, I would argue, happened in many Churches of Christ congregations by the end of the 19th century.

Campbell could even wax eloquent – at times – about the latitude each congregation had in its administrative permutations. In this way, he sounds much closer to Hodge than would appear on the surface. For example, in a discussion about adiaphora, he claims, “For these, as well as for all the circumstantial matters of any particular community, the Apostles gave no specific directions… These, then are necessarily left to the wisdom and discretion of the whole community, as the peculiar exigencies and mutations of society may require”: Campbell, \textit{The Christian System}, 76. See section 1.3 for a much more extensive examination of this distinction.

\textsuperscript{155} Deductive syllogisms were the favourite whipping boys of the Scottish and American Common Sense Realists, who saw Bacon’s inductive methodology as the panacea to all things Aristotle.
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the instrument of salvation, was to look as it did in the fully revealed facts of the Acts and Epistles, as interpreted not by the scholastic theologian or trained clergyman, but by the close inductive reading of the everyman. Here we come to see that the Church is, in Campbell’s theology, both a part of the subject of Scripture, but more importantly the very vehicle utilized by God to realize the object of Scripture as well. Thus, the object of Scripture was not, as it might appear at first glance, an escapist individualism of the Christian and his Bible, but the “perfection of the church” which entailed the “union of true Christians… [and] the conversion of the world.”

Hodge: Principle

The legacy of Old Princeton, when it comes to discussions of the Bible, almost always revolves around terms such as “infallible” or “inerrant” as they came to be obsessed over in the generations leading up to the Fundamentalist movement of the early 20th century. Though Hodge is often lumped into this cadre of Presbyterian conservatives, in reality his views on the nature of Scripture were not as developed as the later generations’. Hodge was an exemplary

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156 Campbell, Popular Lectures and Addresses, 592. This object or goal was modeled after the prophetic vision of Jesus for the Church in his High Priestly prayer of John 17.

157 Ernest Robert Sandeen, The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Millenarianism, 1800-1930 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970); cf. Randall Herbert Balmer, “The Princetonians and Scripture: A Reconsideration,” Westminster Theological Journal 44, no. 2 (September 1, 1982): 352–65. For a recent rehabilitative look at Hodge’s understanding of Scripture, see Bradly M. Seeman, “The ‘Old Princetonians’ on Biblical Authority,” in The Enduring Authority of the Christian Scriptures, ed. D.A. Carson (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016), 195–237. In my estimation Seeman overstates his case in two areas: first, by treating “Old Princeton” from Alexander to Warfield with one voice – largely Hodge’s – which misses their important differences; and second, by dismissing the idea that “Old Princeton” was a place of theological innovation with regard to the doctrine of Scripture (including the influence of Common Sense Realism). As a corrective to 20th-century scholarship there is certainly merit to his final point; but it is oversold, as Princeton was clearly using language and tools that the Reformed tradition had not. His thesis that 19th-century Princeton was teaching a doctrine of Scripture that was almost entirely a recapitulation of Reformational theology is bolstered by his reliance on Charles Hodge; however, it ignores the fact that A.A. Hodge and B.B. Warfield extend the discussion in a new and more “innovative” way.

158 The most famous article to come from the later generation was a joint effort by A.A. Hodge and B.B. Warfield, published in the Presbyterian Review (1881), simply titled “Inspiration.” It can be found partially reprinted in Noll, The Princeton Theology, 1812-1921, 218–32. It is true, as Noll notes, that a significant amount of the foundational material for this article was taken from Charles Hodge’s 1857 review article, but there are some notable additions too: Ibid., 135–41. Kelsey suggests there was a “progressive sclerosis in his successors,” but summarizes Hodge’s own view of inspiration this way: “Hodge’s doctrine of inspiration may be seen to provide
antebellum Common Sense Realist and a Baconian interpreter of Scripture, making him a man of
his time, or perhaps even the man of his time in America. All of this to explain that although
there was a strong continuity between Hodge and the later Princeton theologians, he should be
viewed primarily as a typical mid-19th-century evangelical theologian, rather than an inchoate
Fundamentalist. Furthermore, this section is not aimed at a close examination of the evolution of
Princetonian views of Scripture, but focuses on the material connection between Hodge’s
ecclesiology and his doctrine of Scripture.

purely formal meta-linguistic rules for how to talk about the Bible as at once an infallible guide for Christian faith
and practice and as the work of historically conditioned free agents": David H. Kelsey, “Charles Hodge as
Interpreter of Scripture,” in Charles Hodge Revisited: A Critical Appraisal of His Life and Work, ed. John W.

157. Wells notes that Hodge was highly respected within the 19th century, and only during the latter two-thirds of
the 20th century he has begun to be labelled a “reactionary fundamentalist.” Hodge was certainly aware that he was
out of step with much German and some English biblical scholarship, and starting in the 50s in particular he was
also keenly aware that many of his fellow Americans were using Romantic philosophy and Higher Critical tools that
were once alien to America. Until at least after the Civil War, if not until his death, Hodge remained a leading voice
within the majority camp of American biblical scholarship. The Bushnells, Parkers, Emersons, Brownsons and
Nevins were the exceptions, as prominent and influential as they collectively were. On the other hand, Hodge’s son
(A.A. Hodge) and his son’s predecessor (B.B. Warfield), who shared liberally in the elder Hodge’s philosophy and
methodology, were keenly aware that they were becoming outsiders in an increasingly polarizing American scene.

For two prominent examples of scholars who challenge the dominance of the Common Sense Realist –
Baconian synthesis in Hodge’s theological method, see D.A. Carson, Collected Writings on Scripture, ed. Andrew
David Naselli (Nottingham: Apollos, 2010), 70–73; Paul Kjoss Helseth, “Right Reason” and the Princeton Mind:
An Unorthodox Proposal (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2010). While Carson’s critique is dated (originally 1986), he
makes some valid points which are taken up in the new wave of Princeton historiography beginning at the end of the
1980s with Stewart, Hoffecker, Noll, and Moorhead. Helseth’s concerns with the categorization of Hodge in this
manner are at first glance more substantial. He admits that Hodge was influenced by Common Sense Realism and
Baconianism and used the synthesis, but predominantly wants his philosophical assumptions to be viewed as a
subservient tool to Hodge’s Reformed theological heritage. Though it reads like a biting critique of past Hodge and
Princetonian scholarship, it is not as drastic a corrective as Helseth assumes. Most historians and theologians
working on Hodge would readily admit Helseth’s thesis that Hodge is not a rationalist, but a Reformed thinker first
and foremost, even if others find his case slightly overstated. Here I have attempted to keep both Hodge’s
theological heritage and his philosophical underpinnings in tension, as it seems to me an impossibility to decouple
them in his own theology.

160 Aubert concludes that a cluster of forces led Scripture to be the fountainhead of all of Hodge’s theology:
“[A] result of his loyalty to Reformed theology, his training, his vocation as a biblical theologian, and his encounter
with German scholarship”: Aubert, The German Roots of Nineteenth-Century American Theology, 168. For
comprehensive examinations of Princetonian hermeneutics during the 19th century, see Marion Ann Taylor, “The
Old Testament in the Old Princeton School” (Ph.D., Yale University, 1988); Stewart, “The Tethered Theology.”
Hodge’s understanding of the nature of Scripture is an appropriate place to begin. In a key statement within his notable 1857 article on the doctrine of inspiration, Hodge summarizes what he sees as the “three great doctrines” of Scripture:

[The] origin of the contents of the Scriptures is from God, that the mode of communication was controlled by the Spirit, and that saving knowledge and faith are the result of spiritual illumination, [these] constitute the essential elements of the doctrine of the Church concerning the Scriptures from the beginning.\(^{161}\)

Hodge repeated these three doctrines in discussions under the general framework of “infallibility,” “inspiration,” and “illumination.” These “three great doctrines” of the nature of Scripture left Hodge with two different interpretative approaches to the Bible, or, perhaps more accurately, two distinct movements in interpreting the Bible: first, an inductive reading of the Bible in search of doctrine; and second, a devotional application of the Bible upon the life of the individual reader.\(^{162}\)

To understand his first interpretive movement (doctrinal), Hodge’s focus on the infallible and inspired nature of the Bible must be unpacked. Hodge emphasized the work of the Holy

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\(^{161}\) Charles Hodge, “ART. III —The Inspiration of Holy Scripture, Its Nature and Proof: Eight Discourses Delivered before the University of Dublin by William Lee,” in *The Book Reviews of Charles Hodge*, Logos Bible Software, 1857. In true Hodge-like style he sweepingly claimed that he was simply re-stating what the Church has believed at all times, by all, and in all places (his version of the Vincentian Canon: *quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus*).

\(^{162}\) Layman distinguishes them as an “objective” and “subjective” dualism, but these words can be problematic for their ambiguity. Layman’s distinction also insinuates that the two aspects never converge within Hodge, which is not true. Layman, “Revelation in the Praxis of the Liturgical Community,” 40. There has been, especially over the past three decades, an increased acknowledgment of and interest in Hodge’s devotional usage of the Bible. It is arguable whether his scientific excavation of the text and his devotional usage ever shared a coherent rationale or method, but there is no doubt that they did both inform his theology in varying degrees. Hoffecker and Noll were the first to suggest that Hodge’s dual approaches to Scripture worked together, instead of as some sort of schizophrenic conflict within himself: Hoffecker, *Piety and the Princeton Theologians*; Hoffecker, *Charles Hodge*; Stewart, “The Tethered Theology”; Charles Hodge, *Charles Hodge: The Way of Life*, ed. Mark A. Noll (New York: Paulist Press, 1987); James H. Moorhead, *Princeton Seminary in American Religion and Culture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012); Aubert, *The German Roots of Nineteenth-Century American Theology*.

Others do not see the same congruency or mutually informing impulses, but readily acknowledge both sides of Hodge’s usage of Scripture. See for instance Stanley E. Grenz, “Nurturing the Soul, Informing the Mind,” in *Evangelicals & Scripture: Tradition, Authority and Hermeneutics*, ed. Vincent E. Bacote, Laura C. Miguélez, and Dennis L. Okholm (IVP, 2009), 30ff; Kelsey, “Charles Hodge as Interpreter of Scripture.” The most prodigious and evident example of this type of devotional Scriptural usage comes from Hodge’s “Sabbath-Afternoon Talks” that were a weekly ritual for students in the Seminary: Charles Hodge, *Princeton Sermons: Outlines of Discourses, Doctrinal and Practical* (London: T. Nelson, 1879).
Spirit, not within the very words of Scripture like Campbell, but upon the authors and readers of the Bible. The Bible was divine, and therefore infallible, because it was the superintended revelation of God. This superintended plan unfolded through the Holy Spirit, who worked on, in, and through the authors of the text in the process of inspiration. Yet, despite their different pneumatological emphases, both Hodge and Campbell shared the all-embracing scope of truth found within the Bible. As Hodge put it, plain and simple, “what is unscriptural is untrue.” In another image, reminiscent of Campbell’s rays of sunlight, Hodge wrote in a sermon,

The Bible is a wonderful book. It brings everything within its sweep. Its truths radiate in every direction, and become implicated with all other truth, so that no form of knowledge—nothing which serves to illustrate the nature of God, the constitution of the universe, or the powers of the human soul—fails to do homage and render service to the book of God.

In bringing “everything within its sweep,” however, the Bible took on slightly different characteristics than it did for Campbell. For Hodge the words of Scripture were always in the service of abstracted doctrine and the theological principles it proposed. “Revelation is the

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163 Hodge, “ART. III—The Inspiration of Holy Scripture, Its Nature and Proof: Eight Discourses Delivered before the University of Dublin by William Lee.” The distinction here should not be overstated. Hodge, like the later Princetonians, also advocated for a “verbal plenary” inspiration of Scripture. The assertion that the words of Scripture were inspired, however, was largely a corollary of Hodge’s primary claim that the authors of the text were inspired and therefore incapable of error. In other words, if the writers of the Bible were inspired then it is a logical necessity, for Hodge, that the words they wrote were also inspired: “But if, (as it actually reveals itself in Scripture,) it is a supernatural control exerted by the Holy Spirit over the minds of its subjects, it must of necessity include the language which they use.”

164 Hodge does not actually claim to know the mechanics of this assertion. He does not want to say it is by pure dictation, but he also readily affirms that Scripture is superintended to the very words used. He wants to find a sweet spot that affirms their infallibility and their human authorship. Hodge, “ART. III—The Inspiration of Holy Scripture, Its Nature and Proof: Eight Discourses Delivered before the University of Dublin by William Lee.”

165 Ibid. To be fair, within the context it is unclear whether he means that what is anti-scriptural (contra Scripture) is untrue or that anything beyond the scope of Scripture is untrue. The context and supporting material in the essay seem to indicate the more radical, latter position.


167 The most striking example of this is Hodge’s earliest commentary, which moves within each section from “Commentary” directly to “Doctrine”: Hodge, A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans (Grand Rapids, Mi.: Kregel, 1882). The 1st edition was published in 1837, almost twenty years before his next major commentary on Ephesians in 1856. Instead of moving from text to doctrine to application as Hodge promoted, Campbell wanted a more direct text-to-application approach which, of course, influenced the patternist interpretation of his constitutional understanding of Scripture.
communication of truth by God to the understandings of men” concluded Hodge, and the revelation of Scripture has a primary goal: “It makes known doctrines.” Hodge pronounced Hodge stoically, “teaches facts.” Or as Kelsey put it, “biblical interpretation for Hodge could not not be interpretation in service of constructive theology.” The sweeping claim of Biblical truth had a certain propositional form and the reader needed the requisite approach to extract the discrete truths that inhered within. This approach was the Baconian inductive science, a methodology Hodge saw in perfect harmony with the natural sciences.

This inductive science of Scripture was intent on developing a comprehensive system of Christian doctrine that included the “objective” truths pertinent to the life of the Church. Hodge summarized the process this way: “Christian theology is nothing but the facts and truths of the Bible arranged in their natural order and exhibited in their mutual relations” with the goal


171 This uniformity of the scientific approach has been called “doxological science.” Stewart, Mediating the Center, 21–22. See also Bozeman, Protestants in an Age of Science. Aside from his late-life preoccupation with Darwinian science, this was clearly seen in his regular reference to the Bridgewater Treatises. For this methodological connection more generally in Hodge, see Charles Andrews Jones III, “Charles Hodge, the Keeper of Orthodoxy: The Method, Purpose and Meaning of His Apologetic” (Ph.D., Drew University, 1989), 46–47; Aubert, The German Roots of Nineteenth-Century American Theology, 173, 176–79; Noll, The Princeton Theology, 1812-1921, 142; Moorhead, Princeton Seminary in American Religion and Culture, 218ff. Hodge was not shy to praise “Lord Bacon” and even claimed Bacon initiated “the reconstruction of almost the whole edifice of human knowledge”: Hodge, “Review of The Advancement of Society in Knowledge and Religion by James Douglas,” in The Book Reviews of Charles Hodge, Logos Bible Software, 1831.

172 Put negatively, Hodge says, “Nothing can be more opposed to Scripture than this depreciation of the importance of doctrine”: Hodge, “ART. III —The Inspiration of Holy Scripture, Its Nature and Proof: Eight Discourses Delivered before the University of Dublin by William Lee.” As Hodge’s journal (BRPR) became more theological in content, it actually increased in the number of articles devoted to biblical criticism. Stewart notes that between 1829 and 1850, a remarkable ~70 articles were devoted to the topic, while the percentage increased between 1850 and 1860 to one in three. He notes that there was not a single hot-button issue in mid 19th-century biblical criticism that was not touched on in the BRPR: Stewart, “The Tethered Theology,” 165, 202.
of the theologian simply being to “exhibit the contents of the Bible in a scientific form.”\footnote{Hodge, “The Vicarious Sacrifice, Grounded in Principles of Universal Obligation By Horace Bushnell,” in \textit{The Book Reviews of Charles Hodge}, Logos Bible Software, 1866.} Rather than finding ecclesial \textit{patterns}, however, Hodge discovered within the raw material of Scripture unrefined \textit{principles} or \textit{laws} that informed his doctrine of the Church.\footnote{His certainty in the method is remarkable: “He must gather the laws from the facts, or they have no more scientific value than the fancies of a poet. This is the inductive method which has given science its firm foundation, and secured its wonderful triumph. Before this method was adopted, all was confusion and failure.” Ibid.} The former (\textit{pattern}) was like a ready-at-hand model to be retraced in the contemporary arena, while the latter (\textit{principle}) needed to be rearranged, organized, reformulated in a different register, and only then could the abstracted truths be applied contextually.

Nowhere is this distinction clearer than in Hodge’s dispute with his southern Presbyterian brethren in the 1850s. On the eve of the Civil War, as tensions peaked between the still-united Old School Presbyterians, the 1860 General Assembly witnessed a very public head-to-head of the two representative theologians of the north and the south: Charles Hodge and James Henley Thornwell. In a skirmish that ostensibly arose from a dispute over the employment of “Boards” within the denomination, Hodge and Thornwell debated the validity of the latter’s \textit{jure divino} ecclesiology.\footnote{Robert Breckinridge and John Adger were on Thornwell’s side (though there were significant differences even among them), while Robert Dabney, another major southern Presbyterian voice, tried to chart more of a middle ground between them. Holifield suggests that Adger was likely closer to a Nevinian position and Dabney closer to a Hodge-like one: E. Brooks Holifield, “Mercersburg, Princeton, and the South: The Sacramental Controversy in the Nineteenth Century,” \textit{Journal of Presbyterian History} 54, no. 2 (July 1, 1976): 251. Throughout this work, unless otherwise noted, the term \textit{jure divino} (or \textit{jus divinum}) is used as a technical title for a loosely defined group of southern (and subsequently Southern) Presbyterian theologians that centred around Thornwell, John B. Adger, and Stuart Robinson.} The title \textit{jure divino} is slightly misleading as both Hodge and Thornwell insisted that the Bible afforded a divinely ordained framework for the Church. The difference, however, was the level on which that framework existed.\footnote{Hodge describes his own ecclesiology as \textit{jure divino} with extensive qualifications as to what that means in his understanding. Hodge, \textit{The Church and Its Polity}, ed. William Durant and Archibald Alexander Hodge (London; New York: T. Nelson, 1879), 123. For an extensive look at the \textit{“Jus Divinum vs. Jus Humanum”} debate among Princetonians, Southern Presbyterians, and others, see Ernest Robert Holloway III, “The Princeton Ecclesiology: Thomas Smyth, Republican Ideology, and the Princeton Circle, 1830-1861” (Ph.D., Westminster}
the general “principles” – high level doctrines – upon which the true Church was to be structured. This was a kind of broad rubric, though certainly no less mandated, that was used to measure the minutiae of ecclesial polity as it arose and adapted within the varied exigencies of innumerable contexts. Hodge’s defense of his own position appears within an image that seems as if it should have come from the pen of Nevin:

There are fixed laws in the Bible, according to which all healthful development and action of the external Church are determined. But as within the limits of the laws which control the development of the human body, there is endless diversity among different races, adapting them to different climes and modes of living, so also in the Church. It is not tied down to one particular mode of organization and action, at all times and under all circumstances.¹⁷⁷

The organic metaphor is not, however, Nevin-like in its explication. Whereas Nevin used these types of evocative word-pictures to speak about change, growth, maturation, and similar phenomena, Hodge used them to simply underscore his ecclesiology of pragmatic difference, grounded in universal timeless doctrine. It was about ecclesial diversity, not organic development. His shorthand for this liberty of ecclesial polity became “discretion,” and its usage became a talking point for the Assembly.¹⁷⁸ In Hodge’s opinion, the lack of discretion allowed for within the Thornwellian *jure divino* system failed on three points: it was impractical, unscriptural, and suicidal. The first and the third complaints are thoroughly lodged in Hodge’s pragmatism, but the second one draws our attention here.¹⁷⁹

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¹⁷⁹ This is certainly not to suggest that his pragmatism was somehow disconnected from his theological rationale, but only to say that it was the result of a more primary commitment. Once Hodge had established what the Bible was and how to interpret it, he found great latitude in anything beyond its bounds. It is not dissimilar to his rather generous understanding of proper adherence to Reformed symbols such as the Westminster catechism. See
Thornwell, on the other hand, did not locate his divinely given “laws” of the Bible in abstracted generalizations. The “laws” were the semantic particulars of Presbyterian ecclesiastical ordinances, authority, and polity. He was, in some ways, closer to Campbell’s *patternist* or literalist reading of the New Testament Church as comprehensively given in the words of the Bible. Hodge was indignant at the degree of structural detail that Thornwell found divinely mandated within the Bible and declared, rather brashly, that his younger colleague suffered from “hyper-hyper-hyper-High Church Presbyterianism.”\(^{180}\) Accusing Thornwell of making his own personal “*inferences*”\(^ {181}\) binding upon the consciences and practices of all Presbyterian churches (and individuals), Hodge laid out his doctrinal principles for the Church as drawn from the Bible: first, the parity of the clergy; second, the representative element that grants the laity power in Church governance through voting; and third, the unity of the Church and all that entails.\(^ {182}\) The Bible, insisted Hodge, does not determine the Church’s “modes of [operation],” but allows the three foundational doctrines to guide its freedom by creating boundaries with unlimited *discretion* within those borders.\(^ {183}\)

In the end, what made Thornwell’s *jure divino* ecclesiology “unscriptural,” according to Hodge, was only superficially that Thornwell saw divine command (“Thus saith the Lord”) where only generic principles were to be extracted. More substantially it was because Thornwell

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Charles Hodge, “Adoption of the Confession of Faith,” in *Essays, Social Commentary, and Other Miscellaneous Writings of Charles Hodge* (Logos Bible Software, 1858).

\(^{180}\) Thornwell, *The Collected Writings of James Henley Thornwell, D.D., LL. D. Late Professor of Theology in the Theological Seminary at Columbia, South Carolina*, 4:228. Thornwell, unperturbed by the elder Hodge’s preeminent place within the Presbyterian Assembly, replied in time, saying, “I must retort that his principles are no, no, no Presbyterianism, no, no, no Churchism! His speech, sir, presented us with a little touch of Democracy, a little touch of Prelacy, and a considerable slice of Quakerism, but no Presbyterianism”: 232-33.

\(^{181}\) Hodge claims that Thornwell has put up a “scaffolding to hide the building” when it comes to finding the doctrine of the Church in the Bible. Ibid., 4:229.

\(^{182}\) Ibid. He formulates these principles slightly differently in several places, but they are always materially the same. See Hodge, *The Church and Its Polity*, 119, 122.

\(^{183}\) Thornwell, *The Collected Writings*, 4:231.
had missed entirely the “plan of salvation” described in the inspired and infallible biblical text.\(^{184}\)

Like Campbell, the soteriological scope of the Bible was primary for Hodge, who never tired of proclaiming, “[For] nothing can be essential to the Church which is not essential to salvation.”\(^{185}\)

The question is whether or not Hodge felt that within the *ordo salutis* there was, in fact, any portion that included the Church?\(^{186}\) The answer appears to be negative. As a case in point, Hodge articulates the Christian doctrines that cannot be delineated without the special revelation of the Bible and omits the Church entirely.\(^{187}\) Therefore, by making Presbyterian polity and all its accoutrement divinely required parts of the Church, as found in Scripture, Thornwell had imposed stringent requirements on salvation itself which Hodge could not accept.\(^{188}\)

Scriptural excavation in search of the objective facts, however, was only one side of Hodge’s usage of the Bible. The entire premise of the devotional reading of the Bible was the search for spiritual unity between the believer and Christ.\(^{189}\) The Bible was, in Hodge’s system, not only a “store-house of facts” as he so famously claimed in his *magnum opus*, but also “the store-house of promises; the granary of spiritual food; the never-failing river of life.”\(^{190}\)

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\(^{184}\) “According to Hodge,” claims Kelsey, “the central question revelation answers is who is saved, and how? The plan of redemption provides the answer to that question and must norm all theological answers to all other questions”: Kelsey, “Charles Hodge as Interpreter of Scripture,” 235.

\(^{185}\) Hodge, *The Church and Its Polity*, 123. This is Hodge’s more sustained case against Thornwell’s position as opposed to the minutes of the Assembly meeting.


\(^{187}\) His list includes “creation and fall of man, redemption, the person of Christ, his atonement, resurrection, ascension, second coming, and kingdom [of God].” Hodge, “ART. III — The Inspiration of Holy Scripture.”

\(^{188}\) This discussion will be picked up further in the following section as Nevin makes a related case against Hodge based on the latter’s Commentary on Ephesians.

\(^{189}\) This is one of the differences between Hodge’s 1857 article on inspiration and A.A. Hodge and B.B. Warfield’s 1881 article. Charles placed a much more pronounced emphasis on “illumination,” as the Spirit corroborated the inspiration of the Scriptures in the heart of the believer. He did not deny the external and internal evidences of Biblical infallibility, but was drawn to the immediacy of the Spirit impressing upon the reader of Scripture its true divinity. This is especially interesting as Charles lived in an era that was much more preoccupied with the external evidences of Biblical authority (re: Paley, etc.) compared with the later Princetonians. The change in the later Princeton theology professors away from this pietistic emphasis may be a window into the shift toward proto-Fundamentalism.

said, Hodge was careful to articulate that this devotional reading was always dependent upon, and subordinate to, the more primary hermeneutic task of mining for doctrine: “[The] objective presentation of truth to the mind is absolutely necessary to any genuine religious feeling or affection,” or again, “Intellectual apprehension produces feeling, and not feeling intellectual apprehension.” Yet as “antiscriptural” as he accused the Romantic theologians of being in their search for “life” not “doctrine,” Hodge too could affirm that Christianity was in essence “a proposition and a person” and so “we may affirm that Christianity is a doctrine, and in another sense we may with equal truth affirm that Christianity is a life.”

How did a reader of Scripture move from doctrine to devotion? For Hodge, this transition was wrapped up in his very understanding of the way Scripture acted upon the reader through the Spirit’s illumination: the reader found “worth” within Scripture through an enlightened “personal knowledge of the [facts].” Illumination, in other words, was the internal demonstration of the Spirit, supernaturally imparting discernment of the divine truth objectively given in Scripture. It was what made a true doctrine into a true life.

This illumination was rooted in a particular ordo salutis that broadly progressed as follows: Regeneration → Faith → Justification (by imputation) → Sanctification (by impartation). The gracious “initial quickening” of the Spirit in Regeneration was one of the

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193 Hodge, “Review of Christian Life and Doctrine by W. Cunningham.”
195 This paragraph relies heavily on Evans, whose work on Hodge’s method offers an invaluable supplement to earlier ecclesiological examinations of Hodge, such as Deifell: Evans, Imputation and Impartation,
more unique distinctions that Hodge held and it was part-and-parcel with his understanding of the illumination of the reader of Scripture. This prevenient grace bestowed by the Holy Spirit did not simply interpose upon the intellect of the fallen reader, as Calvin had suggested, but it renewed the whole person, regenerating the depraved nature of the one who was to take up and read the inspired and infallible Word of God.

This is not to suggest that any individual who read Scripture was *ipso facto* a regenerate person. Instead, Hodge’s *ordo* was rooted in his Covenant Theology, which was constructed upon a robust doctrine of election. Within his Covenant framework, the understanding of “representation” was central as it pervaded the entire Bible and demarcated the “dispensations of God from the beginning of the world.” For Hodge, however, there were only two legitimate representatives: Adam and Christ. Rather than dividing the Bible into temporal ages, the representation was abstracted from history and crafted into an ahistorical “plan of salvation.”

This is clearly evident in the important distinction between Hodge and Campbell on the nature of

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187–227. There were, of course, many minor details in Hodge’s full *ordo salutis*, but these were the major steps in his understanding.


197 Kelsey, “Charles Hodge as Interpreter of Scripture,” 244.


200 Hodge, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*. Without the same dispensational parsing as Campbell, and rooted in covenantal theology, Hodge saw much more continuity between Israel and the Church, even calling the former the Jewish Church. There were, of course, significant distinctions between the Jewish Church and the Christian Church, but ultimately both fell under the Covenant of Grace effected by Christ. He could boldly assert the continuity, writing, “The promises addressed to the Jewish Church were as explicit and as comprehensive as those addressed to the Christian Church.” Hodge, “The Church - Its Perpetuity,” in *Essays, Social Commentary, and Other Miscellaneous Writings of Charles Hodge* (Logos Bible Software, 1856). Conversely, for some of Hodge’s most critical words about the “abolishment” of the “Old Testament economy” see Hodge, “Relation of the Church and State,” in *Essays, Social Commentary, and Other Miscellaneous Writings of Charles Hodge* (Logos Bible Software, 1863).
a “fact.” Rather than using the term fact in a historical sense, like Campbell, as a thing said or done, Hodge understood a fact to be a universal truth existing beyond the subjective appropriation of the individual. The key distinction was their conception of the Bible as a narrative (Campbell – things said or done) compared to a plan (Hodge – objective truth propositionally given outside the subjective realm). The Scriptural centerpiece of Hodge’s plan was Romans 5 where the foil between Adam (covenant of works) and Christ (covenant of grace) was theologically dominant, providing an outline of the “very structure of the plan grounded in God’s eternal purpose.” As Adam was the covenant representative of fallen humanity, so too was Christ the covenant representative of redeemed humanity. This soteriological understanding of representation is ground zero for Hodge’s doctrine of election, which he sums up this way:

In other words, God having out of his mere good pleasure, elected some to everlasting life, did enter into a covenant of grace, to deliver them out of the estate of sin and misery, and to bring them into an estate of salvation, by a Redeemer. The only Redeemer of God’s elect is the Lord Jesus Christ, who being the eternal Son of God, became man, was made under the law, satisfied, by his obedience and death, all its demands, and thus fulfilled the conditions of that covenant on which the salvation of his people was suspended, and thereby acquired a right to them as his stipulated reward.

The federal union of Christ and the elect was rooted in an understanding of representation by “imputation along consistently extrinsic and forensic lines.” It was then the role of the Holy Spirit to impress upon the reader of Scripture the change in judiciary status that had been wrought by this covenantal transfer. The Bible, therefore, illumined by the Holy Spirit in the life of the elect reader, worked as an instrument that brought the true believers into a spiritual union

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201 Kelsey, “Charles Hodge as Interpreter of Scripture,” 234–35. Kelsey calls Romans 5 Hodge’s canon within the canon and then quickly adds that Hodge would not be satisfied with that simplification. The fact remains, however, that Romans 5 did frame the way he read Scripture in both his doctrinal and devotional modes. Kelsey notes that it is no surprise that Hodge did not produce a commentary on any of the Gospels, because he ignored completely their history-likeness: See Hodge, A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, 279–99.


203 Evans, Imputation and Impartation, 200.
with their covenant head, Jesus Christ, who is the pretemporally ordained representative for redeemed humanity. Scripture accomplished this spiritual unification by first detailing this plan of redemption in plain fact or ready-made doctrine and, second, by the illumination of the reader through regeneration, in order to experience an inward confirmation of the federal representation of Christ which was first outwardly revealed.

In the end, at the risk of reductionism, the two Scriptural emphases of Hodge – doctrine and devotion – find congruity in their prioritization of a private and spiritualized personal salvation over and against the potential mediation of the Church. Hodge emphasized this by stating matter-of-factly that the doctrine of the Church cannot be anything more than what the biblical word ecclesia means: the ones who are called. Accusing the “ritualists,” like Nevin and Thornwell, of missing entirely the import of this biblical doctrine of the Church, he concludes that within the plan of salvation “everything is spiritual.”

Objectively (or doctrinally) the Bible gives the naked facts of the grand plan of salvation that is fulfilled in Christ as the covenant representative, but as it unfolds in Hodge’s work, it is often reduced to the election of individuals for that covenant purpose. The doctrinal approach skirts almost entirely the doctrine of the Church, leaving only three generic principles that are primarily aimed at protecting the freedom of the individual and the spiritual priority of the Church. Moreover, the spiritualized nature of the Christian faith is heightened by the subjective (or devotional) reading of the Bible, which leans heavily on the illumination by the Holy Spirit upon the individual, as it

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\text{\footnotesize 204 Cf. Aubert, The German Roots of Nineteenth-Century American Theology, 212–16.}
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\text{\footnotesize 205 Charles Hodge, “Idea of the Church,” in Essays, Social Commentary, and Other Miscellaneous Writings of Charles Hodge (Logos Bible Software, 1853), 8ff.}
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\text{\footnotesize 206 Charles Hodge, “Theories of the Church (1846),” in The Church and Its Polity, ed. Durant and A.A Hodge (New York: Nelson, 1879), 53.}
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builds a connection between the reader and Christ’s representative role in salvation, without mention of a necessary ecclesiological function within the plan.²⁰⁷

**Nevin: Perichoresis**

Nevin’s review article of Hodge’s commentary on Ephesians prompted A.R. Kremer to call it “the most brilliant performance of his post-Mercersburg life,” claiming that the review “tore Dr. Hodge’s theory to shreds.”²⁰⁸ The commentary, and even more so Nevin’s response, provides us with a microcosm of where Nevin’s doctrine of Scripture diverges from Hodge and Campbell and how that makes a difference in his ecclesiology.²⁰⁹ Nevin begins by attempting to dispel a philosophical myth that he claims Hodge swallowed whole – the presuppositionless interpreter of the Bible.²¹⁰ It is immediately clear that Nevin has, if not entirely then largely, shed his training in the Baconian method of biblical interpretation; hence, rather than methodically dissecting and collecting the facts of Scripture in order to build a doctrine of the Church *a posteriori*, Nevin does not balk at the need for an *a priori* confessionalism that is able to organize

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²⁰⁷ This dissertation proposes that something unique coalesces in antebellum ecclesiology that endurably marks evangelical expressions of the Church. This is not the same as suggesting it is *sui generis*, as it clearly took many of its theological cues from the previous century. In the Anglo-American world, the Bangorian controversy drew many of these same battle lines; and though Hodge does not mention it directly (that I am aware of), it shows the perennial nature of the questions at hand in the modern Protestant churches. For the parallels between this chapter and the Bangorian controversy, see Andrew Starkie, *The Church of England and the Bangorian Controversy, 1716-1721* (Boydell & Brewer, 2007), chapters 6 & 7. Cf. J. Neville Figgis, “Hoadly and the Bangorian Controversy,” The Guardian, October 11, 1905, 1679.
²⁰⁹ Nevin claims that the letter of Ephesians is “of cardinal authority” for the doctrine of the Church. He also maintains that the letter is the “key” for a “right understanding” of all the Pauline epistles and even the entire epistolary canon of the New Testament. Obviously, the Pauline authorship of Ephesians was not even on the scholarly horizon in the mid-19th century; however, it is doubtful such Higher Criticism would have crippled Nevin’s point substantially, as he readily includes all the letters of the New Testament in a coherent voice knowing that there were different authors. In other words, authorial intention, though important within Nevin’s article, is not focused on the psychological constitution of Paul, but on the theological place its message plays in the economy of salvation. Nevin, “Hodge on Ephesians,” 46.
²¹⁰ “It may sound well,” notes Nevin, “to talk of coming to the Scriptures without any theory or scheme; but there is not in fact, and cannot be, any such freedom from all prepossession”: Nevin, “The Sect System,” *The Mercersburg Review* 1, no. 5 (1849): 491; Nevin, *Antichrist: Or the Spirit of Sect and Schism* (New York: J.S. Taylor, 1848), 82 footnote. He makes a similar critique of Campbell in the late 40s: Nevin, “The Sect System,” 491; Nevin, *Antichrist*, 82.
and make sense of Scripture.\footnote{For an even more explicit treatment of the necessity of a creedal context for interpreting Scripture, see Nevin, “The Anti-Creed Heresy,” \textit{The Mercersburg Review} 4 (1852): 606–19; Nevin, “The Heidelberg Catechism,” \textit{The Mercersburg Review} 4 (1852): 155–86. In these two articles from 1852, Nevin responds to two separate articles published in the \textit{BRPR} by Dr. Proudfit of the Dutch Reformed Church (Rutgers College), presumably with the blessing and perhaps even encouragement of Hodge. In both articles, Nevin goes to lengths to show that only a genuinely Christian symbol that is aligned with the great tradition can be \textit{catholic}.} Nevin’s sharpest criticism within the successive articles is not that Hodge operates without a confessional framework, however, but that his \textit{a priori} doctrine of election is just such a framework and that Hodge either refuses to acknowledge it as such, or worse, he is ignorant that it operates in this way.\footnote{Nevin, “Hodge on Ephesians,” especially 67-70.} Election is, claimed Nevin cheekily, the principle on which Hodge’s commentary “lives, moves, and has its being… from the first page to the last,”\footnote{Nevin, “Hodge on Ephesians: Second Article,” 195.} and he adds, “It is difficult to conceive of any exegesis, more monstrous than this.”\footnote{Nevin, “Hodge on Ephesians,” 75. Nevin does not outright reject a doctrine of election, but only the way in which Hodge presents it and how he lets it warp his exegesis. For Nevin’s reinterpretation, see Nevin, “Hodge on Ephesians: Second Article,” 215–24.} Fitted with this highly particular doctrine of election, according to Nevin, Hodge’s hermeneutic led to a constricted ecclesiology that was at the whim of a pretemporal, universal decree.\footnote{Nevin’s most direct accusation is as follows: “The doctrine of election, turning on the notion of an absolute unconditional decree in the mind of God…[is] the only really efficient cause, we may say, of the whole work. God having his mere good pleasure determined, from all eternity, to save a certain fixed number of persons belonging to the human family, and not to save any besides, is supposed then to have ordered the entire plan of redemption in subordination to this purpose”: Nevin, “Hodge on Ephesians,” 61. The vital point, which cannot be fleshed out fully in this section, is that Hodge’s “pure abstract spiritualism” as displayed in the Commentary is manifested in a “grossly dualistic” manner, leaving the Church without an objective life in the history of the world (67).} The Church could not be more or less than the eternally elected \textit{true Christians}, and because this divine decree is imperceptible to the appearances and judgments of humankind, the Church must be sharply divided into the \textit{Invisible Church} and the \textit{Visible Church} with a dubious connection between them. Hodge insisted that the visible-invisible hallmark of his ecclesiology is borrowed directly from his Reformed heritage; however, within his hundred-page response, Nevin makes a sustained case that it is more directly a consequence of his specific understanding
and interpretation of Scripture – not the direct inheritance of an Augustinian-Calvinistic tradition.  

This barrage against his former teacher indubitably left an already strained relationship even more fragile in the 50s. However, Nevin’s hermeneutical criticisms were by no means isolated to Hodge’s work. The German Reformed theologian had little issue with the evangelical consensus of the nature of Scripture, but took great exception to the conventional interpretive methods and theological frameworks. Arguably the most repeated theme in Nevin’s writing was the naiveté and danger he saw in the evangelical rallying cry of the Bible as a “text book” or “formulary” that needed only to be placed in “every man’s hands… without note or comment” in order for the inevitable “full victory of Christianity” to be realized. Again, at the root it was not an accusation of a misguided understanding of what the Bible is, but how it was used. Nevin offered his own summary of what he considered an anemic methodology, writing,

> With immense self-complacency, the system lays its hand on the Bible, and says: This is my warrant. Aye, but who is to interpret this written revelation? Reason, replies the system… There we have it. Reason, every man’s reason for himself, the world’s private judgment and common sense with such religious illumination as it may come to in its own sphere, is the court, the tribunal, by which the law in this case is to take the form of truth and life. Is that not rationalism almost without disguise?

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216 See section 2.2 for further discussion on this topic.

217 As Nevin puts it: “The question, as one would suppose any child might be able to see, regards not at all the authority of the Bible, but wholly and exclusively the interpretation of the Bible, the true and proper construction of what is to be considered its actual sense.” Nevin, “Thoughts on the Church: Second Article,” The Mercersburg Review 10 (1858): 385. Not surprising, Hodge did not seem to think as highly of Nevin’s understanding of the nature of Scripture. In a drawn-out comparison of Schaff and Nevin – in which the former is presented in much more glowing terms – Hodge concludes by claiming there are two root differences between the German Reformed theologians: “justification, and the authority of Scripture as the only infallible rule of faith”: Hodge, “History of the Apostolic Church.”

218 Nevin, “Early Christianity,” The Mercersburg Review 3 (1851): 549. In a similar rant, Nevin insists, “It is not made like a catechism; it is no formal directory of things to be done and things to be left undone”: Nevin, “The Sect System,” 504-05.

219 He puts it this way, “[The] question here relates not to the proper authority of the Bible… but to the right interpretation of the Bible”: Nevin, “Dr. Berg’s Last Words,” The Mercersburg Review 4 (1852): 287.

220 Nevin, “Evangelical Radicalism,” The Mercersburg Review 4 (1852): 511. There is a touch of irony in this critique – unquestionably known to Nevin – as the Mercersburg theologians were often accused of rationalism because of their connection to German theology and philosophy. Nevin, much more adept philosophically than many of his opponents, uses the term in an appropriate fashion here, while his opponents often could not distinguish between Strauss, Hegel, and Tholuck. See also John Williamson Nevin and William Harvey Erb, Dr. Nevin’s
The results of this “principle of private judgment, the hobby of all sects,” was plain to Nevin: it “[opened] the door indefinitely for the lawful introduction of as many more [sects], as religious ingenuity or stupidity may have power to invent.”

What appeared to his peers as a hermeneutic with potential to unite the variegated Protestant landscape in the marketplace of American religion, Nevin was adamant would continue fragmenting it until it became a “motley mass of protesting systems, all laying claim so vigorously here to one and the same watchword.” For proof, he looked no further than his former German Reformed colleague John Winebrenner, Alexander Campbell, and the various groups of “Christians.” Each professed the same method of interpretation which they avowed would inevitably unite the evangelical world, yet Winebrenner’s Church of God remained distinct from Campbell’s Disciples of Christ, which remained (largely) apart from the Christians: “[Why] are not both merged in the broad fellowship of the ‘Christians,’ as the proper ocean or

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221 Nevin, “The Sect System,” 494. It is quite difficult to determine the direct influences on Nevin regarding his diatribes against private judgment. Without a doubt, by the time he reached Mercersburg in 1840, this position was solidified and we know that he was reading both Coleridge and the Oxford Tracts during his time in Pittsburgh during the 30s. In fact, in his reminiscences of his younger years (pre-Mercersburg), he notes that the fortuitous gift of one of the Tracts (by a friend who found it “dry and tiresome reading”) sparked a change in Nevin’s thinking and he was “converted in any sense to the views of the book.” J. W. Nevin, “My Own Life: Historical Awakening (XVI),” Reformed Church Messenger (1867-1874) 36, no. 24 (June 15, 1870): 1. Both Layman and DiPuccio have done extensive work on the philosophical sources that influenced Nevin before Mercersburg, much of which was condensed into a single journal issue: B. Howard Paine, ed., The New Mercersburg Review 17 (Spring 1995). Both Layman and DiPuccio agree that Nevin’s reprinting of a translated article by Tholuck in The Friend which defends and promotes Coleridge as a way “out of the flat valleys of common sense of Reid and Beattie…” shows his shift away from a private judgment mode of interpreting Scripture. David Layman, “Was Nevin Influenced by S.T. Coleridge?,” The New Mercersburg Review 17 (Spring 1995): 54–58; William DiPuccio, “Nevin & Coleridge,” The New Mercersburg Review 17 (Spring 1995): 59–63. During the 30s, and especially in 1840 when he joined Rauch at Mercersburg, increasingly the philosophical and theological influences on Nevin were critical of the Anglo-American predilection for private judgment in Scriptural interpretation. It is, however, difficult to assess where Nevin borrowed directly and where he was only broadly influenced.

universe of one and the same Bible faith?” Despite the question being rhetorical, Nevin responded to himself claiming that the “pedantic parade” which evangelicals were making of the Bible was reduced to “My sense of the Bible against the sense of the whole world besides.” Indeed, the antebellum interpreter “with all his talk of following the Bible, means by it simply, in the end, his own sense of what the Bible teaches.” As if frustrated by having to defend his contrarian theory of ecclesial division, Nevin concluded, “The thing is too plain to admit any sort of dispute”; and yet he spent most of his academic life in the late 40s and early 50s defending his side of the dispute.

The lengthy response to Hodge’s commentary and his other abundant criticisms of private judgment helps to show that Nevin genuinely paid attention to Scripture and was a self-conscious interpreter. It is a temptation, however, for the reader of Nevin – both now and then – to hear only the extreme opposition to the sola scriptura refrain that seemed ubiquitous among his antebellum evangelical peers. His string of reproofs in major works like The Anxious Bench, The Mystical Presence, and Antichrist, as well as hundreds of pages of articles in the MR dressing down both the clergy and the theologians of his era, often gives the impression that

223 Ibid., 494. Nevin seems unaware that Campbell’s Disciples had united with one of the largest bodies of “Christians” in Kentucky (1832, represented by Barton Stone), and attempts were made for further unification that were rebuffed by other groups. This is not a full vindication of Campbell, but perhaps a half-rebuttal. Accusations like this make it all the more disappointing that Campbell seems to have never read or, at least, never responded to Nevin’s writing. The denomination which John Winebrenner began – referred to by Nevin as Winebrennerianism – is now known as the Churches of God General Conference and is broadly evangelical in theology and baptistic in polity.

There was, in fact, one initiative aimed at joining Winebrenner’s group with Campbell’s Disciples, initiated by the Pennsylvania cohort of the Christian Connexion and taken up by the Unitarians. Campbell demurred because of their insufficient clarity on Trinitarian theology, and it seems that Winebrenner completely ignored the overture. See “Berry Street Ministerial Conference,” The Christian Examiner 4, no. 39 (1845): 138.

224 Nevin, Antichrist, 58.
225 Ibid., 57.
227 If the preceding material on Campbell and Hodge was not evidence enough, see two excellent windows into this cultural phenomenon that continues to shape American theology, particularly its evangelical camp: Nathan O. Hatch and Mark A. Noll, eds., The Bible in America: Essays in Cultural History (New York: OUP, n.d.); Claudia Setzer and David A. Shefferman, eds., The Bible and American Culture: A Sourcebook (New York: Routledge, 2011).
Nevin rejected wholesale the biblical emphasis of his evangelical peers.\textsuperscript{228} This critique of popular evangelical theology, however biting and acerbic it could be from the pen of Nevin against the “The Bible and Private Judgment!”,\textsuperscript{229} was not as sweeping as it may appear at first read. “We accept the Bible as God’s word” and, reaffirmed Nevin, “do not undervalue the Bible in favor of tradition,” nor even “[do we] question the right of private judgment in its true form.”\textsuperscript{230} Quite simply, Nevin could not ignore Scripture because of his robust Christology.\textsuperscript{231} Layman notes that for Nevin, “the divine life of the incarnate Word of God was mediated through the inscripturated Word of God.”\textsuperscript{232} Even within his most cutting pieces of the 1840s, Nevin refused to mute the Bible or its authority, making bold claims like the following from \textit{The Mystical Presence}:

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\item Despite the fact that all three of these works were produced in the 40s (an amazing feat!), it is not peculiar to that era in Nevin’s life. Dipuccio claims that after the Civil War Nevin became more engaged in biblical work as a kind of return to his writings in the 30s before his Mercersburg years. This, indeed, appears at least generally accurate; nonetheless, it also seems clear that Nevin maintained a consistent interest in Scripture from the early 30s (his time writing about Coleridge and the Bible) to his article on the inspiration of the Bible in the 80s, including his Mercersburg years, despite the occasional pieces that criticized a certain form of biblical theology. Others, such as Appel, Reilly, and Nichols, have made similar claims about one or more “transitions” in Nevin’s theology, with the final one occurring in the 1870s, focused on Scripture and induced by Swedenborg, Rothe, and theosophic writings. This falls outside the time-bounds of this study, but the discussion can be found in summary form in Layman, who makes a sustained counter-case for more continuity in Nevin’s theology, claiming that Nevin’s growing disillusionment with German theology and his rejection of papal infallibility at VI left him downplaying “history” and “church” and clinging more tightly to his only other enduring source of authority after 1870: “Scripture.” Layman, “Revelation in the Praxis of the Liturgical Community,” 7, 85, 106; Nevin, \textit{The Anxious Bench} (Chambersburg, PA: Publication Office of the German Reformed Church, 1844); Hodge, “Review: The Mystical Presence. A Vindication of the Reformed or Calvinistic Doctrine of the Holy Eucharist. By the Rev. John W. Nevin”; Nevin, \textit{Antichrist}.
\item Nevin, “The Sect System,” 495, 493. This is merely one instance of a refrain that is repeated \textit{ad nauseam} by Nevin, which he directly connects with Campbell and “rationalism” in his follow-up article: Nevin, “The Sect System: Second Article,” 528.
\item Nevin, \textit{Antichrist}, 59n.
\item Nevin’s closest thing to a definition of inspiration or a metaphysical account of the nature of Scripture came in his extended response to Brownson: “Inspiration transcends nature; but it is on the other hand a real entrance of the supernatural into this lower sphere. The Bible in this respect is just as thoroughly human, as it is found to be also heavenly and divine… How all this is accomplished, is not here the question [nor was it ever for Nevin]… Holy men of old spake, as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. The speech is human speech, in all respects, under Divine motion. Any theory of inspiration which leaves this out of view, or which implies the contrary in any way, is of course radically defective and false.” Nevin, “Brownson’s Review Again,” \textit{The Mercersburg Review} 2 (1850): 312.
\item Layman, “Revelation in the Praxis of the Liturgical Community,” 164.
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The way is now open for an appeal to the scriptures, which must be regarded, of course, as the ultimate standard of truth in this whole case. Christianity is not a philosophical theory; nor is it conveyed to us in the form of an infallible outward tradition. It exists, indeed, for itself, as a permanent supernatural constitution in the Church; but to be understood in this character, it must be measured and interpreted continually by the written word of God, which has been graciously committed to the keeping of the Church for this very purpose.\(^{233}\)

Nevin’s ongoing commitment to Scripture as the norma normans of the Christian faith is clear in the above quote, but it also gives a clue to the relationship between the Bible and the Church. The image of Christianity being “a permanent supernatural constitution of the Church” describes a relationship of the most intimate kind, though it stops short of conflating Christianity and the Church entirely. Thereby Nevin avoids the direct equation of what he calls the Actual Church with the Ideal Church\(^{234}\).

The teleological scope of the Bible was first and foremost Christological for Nevin, not soteriological in the anthropocentric sense of a plan of salvation (Hodge) or a pattern for the age (Campbell).\(^{235}\) Unlike Hodge and Campbell, Nevin thought that the proper metaphorical


\(^{234}\) This distinction is discussed in more detail in chapter 2 section 2, but it loosely equates to the traditional Reformed distinction of the visible and invisible Church. For the clearest explication of this, including the myriad of philosophical influences at play, see especially DiPuccio, “The Dynamic Realism of Mercersburg Theology,” 125ff.

\(^{235}\) This is perhaps misleading, as both Hodge and Campbell were obsessively Christological. However, in the theology of both, Christ had a more functional role – albeit an indispensable and irreplaceable role – in salvation, while Nevin focused much more extensively on the person of Christ in a substantive (not functional) manner. Nevin seems to recognize that he is using similar language and concepts in a very different way than his peers, writing, “[Their] own construction of Christianity may embrace, to a certain extent, the same christological and soteriological positions and terms; but they will be found to have not just the same meaning; there is a difference always in their drift and scope”: Nevin, “Thoughts on the Church: Second Article,” 417. Here Annette Aubert contrasts the Christology of Emanuel Vogel Gerhart (and Mercersburg) with the Biblicism of Hodge (and Princeton); however, she casts it as a methodological difference which seems to me to be a category mistake. Christ and the Bible are not of the same kind (nor would Gerhart or Hodge consider them to be) and therefore the contrast does not hold. This is where the work of Evans is much more theologically attuned as he understands the contrast is soteriological – with both claiming “union with Christ” as their own. The contrast can be stated as between the incarnation and the crucifixion, but even that does not get to the heart of the distinction. At its root the distinction is between an almost entirely spiritualistic “union with Christ” (Hodge and Princeton) and a fully incorporated material-spiritual “union with Christ” (Nevin, Gerhart, and Mercersburg). See Aubert, The German Roots of Nineteenth-Century American Theology; Evans, Imputation and Impartation. For a recent assessment of Calvin’s understanding of “union with Christ” that emphasizes both the forensic and the participatory aspects, see J. Todd Billings, Calvin, Participation, and the Gift: The Activity of Believers in Union with Christ (Oxford: OUP, 2007).
counterpart for the sun was not the Bible but Christ, who is “the centre and the sun which illuminates everything else.”236 Thus, the “entire Old Testament becomes in this way a great prophecy or type of him that was to come.”237 Nevin utilizes metaphors between the Testaments like child-to-man and seed-to-plant as he crafts a trajectory of the Bible that has the Old Testament prefiguring the New “on a narrower and inferior scale.”238 And although Judaism was “shadows and types only” instead of the “very realities themselves,” it still carried within “its own bosom actually the ‘powers of the world to come.’”239 There was a material connection and continuity between the Jews and Christians that Nevin was willing to take far enough to suggest that the Church – as the body of Christ – is simply the outgrowth of the “original constitution” which was found in the synagogue.240

The person of Christ does not simply bind the two seemingly disparate Testaments together organically. He also extends directly into the “mystical body of Christ, as it has existed in the world, in a real and not simply imaginary way, from the beginning.”241 While his peers were preoccupied with seeking extra-canonical evidence for the authority of Scripture – or at least reasonable empirical corroboration within the natural world – Nevin was winding his tautology unapologetically tighter: The Old and New Testaments pointed to Christ, who endowed the church with a “living authority” as the extension of his body, and the church in turn affirmed and verified the authority of the Old and New Testaments.242 The Bible was the Word

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236 Nevin and Erb, Dr. Nevin’s Theology, 355.
238 Ibid., 79.
239 Nevin, “Hodge on Ephesians: Second Article,” 207. Although it could be considered anachronistic, the term “Judaism” is Nevin’s own, which is why it is retained here.
242 See Nevin, “Early Christianity,” 1851, 550ff. Nevin does not mince words about the historical priority of the Church; however, he in no way sees this as denigrating the authority or inspiration of the Bible. In 1852 he
of God “not on the outside of the church, and as a book dropped from the skies… but in the bosom of the church alone, and in organic union with that great system of revelation of which this was acknowledged to be the pillar and ground.”

Therefore, the interpreter of Scripture must be “within the horizon” or “underneath the broad canopy, of the new supernatural creation, he is called to contemplate.” The key was not to extract “isolated texts,” but to expose the interwoven and related structure of Scripture so it could be “comprehended as a whole.” That, for Nevin, was Biblical Theology, not the “bible proof” that was being offered by many of his Baconian contemporaries, which appeared to Nevin to treat Christianity as a “skeleton… for use in the dissecting room.” The “unhistorical and outwardly mechanical use of Scripture” exhibited by Baconian biblical theology was “heartless and hollow” when compared to a confessional theologian’s interpretation of Scripture that resulted in “historical, objective, sacramental and churchly” theological outcomes. The panoramic consideration of the Scriptural mosaic could only be seen and rightly appreciated, insisted Nevin, by those reading and interpreting the Bible within the Church, universal and historical. “Where there are no common premises,” boldly claimed Nevin, “there can be of course no common conclusions.”

The result was a practice of Scriptural interpretation that is best described as a search for coherence or fittingness. Nevin’s concerns were twofold. First, he aimed to piece back together the “fragments” parsed by his peers in order to step back and find a wider and more fitting theological sweep of the text itself; and second, he aimed to ensure that the interpretation of Scripture was fitting within the tradition of the Church as it developed and evolved over the

writes, “She [the Church] formed the canon of the New Testament, deciding what it should contain and what it should not contain, and affixing to it the stamp of inspiration”: Nevin, “The Anti-Creed Heresy,” 610.
245 Nevin, The Mystical Presence, 244–45.
246 Ibid.
centuries. Nevin abhorred the search for “single naked texts” to be employed as the sole arbiters of doctrine in the first place. Nevin writes,

But these texts are, after all, only a small fraction of the evidence, which is really contained in the Epistle for the doctrine [of the Church] in question. That is found, not so much in what the Apostle directly asserts on the subject, as in what he presumes to be true of it, from the salutation with which his Epistle begins to the benediction that brings it to a close. The idea of the Church runs as a silent hypothesis, or underlying assumption, through all his teachings and exhortations.

The “silent hypothesis” was not a hidden hypothesis but one so large for Nevin that – as one might claim – it goes without saying. The writings of the Bible presume the reality of the Church already historically unfolding. The doctrine of the Church, if it was to be found in the Bible, was not upheld by the shards of evidence scattered in disjunctive verses, but needed a wider perspective that could account for a more “general and broad view… as a whole.”

To understand Nevin’s second concern – the fittingness of Scriptural interpretation within the tradition – the difference between his and his contemporaries’ understandings of history needs further exploration. In this context, regarding the Bible and the Church, the most helpful comparison is not with Hodge, but with Campbell. Campbell was preoccupied with history as it was parsed into eons, but he was also clearly conflicted about what to do with the distinction between salvation history, or the acts of God, and human history. In the end, Campbell’s patternistic, constitutional reading of the Acts-Epistles led to a provisional rejection of vast swathes of human history and a desire of the contemporary church to make what Clark Gilpin has

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249 Nevin, *The Mystical Presence*, 244–45. Nevin goes on here to claim, “All turns on the position of the beholder himself, and his power of observing and comprehending the revelation as a whole. He must stand in the truth, have sympathy with it, feel the authority that belongs to it in fact, in order that he may have power to do justice at all to its presence.”


251 Ibid., 244. Emphasis added.

252 Ibid., 243. Overall Nevin was uncomfortable speaking of the Church being “found” in the Bible at all. As a representative example of this aversion, he writes, “The Church is itself, according to the New Testament, a living constitution, not made of men after a supposed Divine prescription merely, but Divinely made, not an inspired doctrine simply but a supernatural reality and fact, built in a real outward way on the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.” Nevin, “Cyprian,” 363.
called “transhistorical contact with [the New Testament Church] in the Bible.” It is not an ahistorical rejection or dismissal of history outright, but a subordination of much human history as it existed from the post-apostolic age to the 19th century. The divine constitution of the Church was “inserted into history by divine revelation, yet never genuinely implicated in that history.” There is a static quality to Campbell’s divine component of church history, like a biological implant that never fully participates with the vitality of the host organism, remaining unconnected despite its prominence.

Nevin, conversely, begins with a historical consciousness that is shaped largely by two philosophical systems: Hegel and Schelling’s Idealism and Neander’s Romanticism. The former upheld a historical dialectic, while the latter espoused a more organic view of development. Both were progressive in their outlook while also ensuring a conservative element of continuity with the past. From 1844, when Schaff joined the seminary, to 1853, when Nevin stepped down from his role as President of Marshall College, Nevin’s writings crescendoed into

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254 Human history, for Campbell, still includes “Church History” despite a high emphasis on the place of the Church in salvation. He seems unaware of, or at least ambivalent about, the apparent conflict within his own theology of the quasi-divine character of the Church and the callous dismissal of so much of Church history as the pure machinations of sinful humanity. See section 2.2 for more on this.
256 For the clearest succinct distinction between these two historical schools in the thought of Nevin, see John B. Payne, “Schaff and Nevin, Colleagues at Mercersburg: The Church Question,” Church History 61, no. 2 (June 1, 1992). See also Holifield, Theology in America. 473–75. The most prominent example of the Idealist dialectic view of history is Schelling’s typology of the Church that saw the Roman Catholic Church as Peter (the Petrine Church), the Protestant Church as Paul (the Pauline Church), and an ongoing search for a new and higher synthesis that would embody a Johannine Church (Schelling would eventually add the Orthodox Church as James in the typology). Schaff borrows this typology from Schelling, calling him “the world’s greatest living philosopher” while also claiming that Joachim of Fiore was likely the first to roughly use the scheme: Philip Schaff, The Principle of Protestantism as Related to the Present State of the Church (Chambersburg, PA: Publication Office of the German Reformed Church, 1845), 174ff. W.A. Muhlenberg, the Episcopal convert who corresponded a great deal with Nevin, attributes this typology to Nevin’s thinking: Muhlenberg, “The Mercersburg Quarterly Review and Dr. Nevin,” The Evangelical Catholic III (February 5, 1853): 46. This is almost certainly an indirect response to Nevin’s 1851 article on Anglicanism where the typology is mentioned (positively) in passing: Nevin, “The Anglican Crisis,” The Mercersburg Review 3 (1851): 396.
257 Payne’s thesis that Schaff and Nevin both held the romantic-idealist views of history and shared much in common, while Schaff emphasized the pole of progress – looking forward – and Nevin emphasized the pole of continuity – looking backwards – is a fascinating and well-argued conclusion. However, the comparison is beyond the bounds of this work. See Payne, “Schaff and Nevin, Colleagues at Mercersburg,” 190.
an outpouring of historical explication.\textsuperscript{258} By the 1852 edition of the \textit{MR}, which was also

Nevin’s last as editor, the theme was ubiquitous: he wrote an astonishing thirteen pieces that year that covered nearly 300 pages of print, and the theme of history and historical development was central to three quarters of the articles.\textsuperscript{259} This coincided with what Nevin’s first 20\textsuperscript{th}-century interpreter labelled his “dizziness,”\textsuperscript{260} referring to what many felt was his conflicted feelings over whether he should follow John Henry Newman and join the Roman Catholic Church.\textsuperscript{261}

\textsuperscript{258} Nevin had already stepped down from his Chair of Theology at the seminary in 1851. In 1854 the college became Franklin and Marshall College. After a brief “retirement” Nevin would again retain the Presidential role of the College for a decade beginning in 1866.

\textsuperscript{259} This included a lengthy 4-part series on Cyprian; two separate responses to accusations from Dr. Proudfit in the \textit{BRPR}; a substantial book review; and a response to Joseph Berg’s farewell address from the German Reformed denomination.

\textsuperscript{260} James I. Good, \textit{History of the Reformed Church in the U.S. in the Nineteenth Century} (New York: Board of Publication of the Reformed Church in America, 1911), 312; James Hastings Nichols, \textit{Romanticism in American Theology; Nevin and Schaff at Mercersburg} (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), 192–217. Good was not a fan of Nevin’s work and is known as the historian of a small counter movement within the German Reformed Church sometimes called the Ursinus School. It centred largely around one-time Nevin supporter J. H. A. Bomberger in the mid-to-late 19\textsuperscript{th} century. Good attributes the “five years of dizziness” saying to an unnamed Catholic (Brownson?); however, this is now common parlance among Nevin interpreters as the period 1851-53 (or even to ’56). I have an alternative theory about why these years are termed his “dizziness.” In an editorial comment by Benjamin Schneck, \textit{The Weekly Messenger} raises reservations about the direction of Nevin’s theology, claiming it was “rising in regular gradation higher and still higher, until our head has become dizzy.” Benjamin S. Schneck, “Mercersburg Review for September Editorial,” \textit{The Weekly Messenger}, September 17, 1851. There is a possibility the linguistic connection is simply coincidental, but at the least it seems logical that Nevin’s “dizziness” is so termed because of the perception of his progressively “higher” ecclesiology, rather than an existential angst in considering a Roman Catholic conversion. The two, of course, could be directly connected.

There are many who think that a potential conversion was a real debate and struggle for Nevin; however, there are others who attribute it to nothing deeper than exhaustion and burnout. Nevin’s first biographer and former student does not give the sense that conversion was a real possibility, nor does his Episcopal correspondent Muhlenberg. Schaff is also unconvinced that this is the direction Nevin is headed, precisely because he believes his historical understanding could not allow it: Appel, \textit{The Life and Work of John Williamson Nevin}, 432ff; Muhlenberg, “The Mercersburg Quarterly Review and Dr. Nevin”; Philip Schaff, “German Theology and the Church Question,” \textit{The Mercersburg Quarterly Review} V (1853): 124–44. It is also of interest that at this time, Nevin’s popularity (or notoriety) were at an all-time high. W.A. Muhlenberg claims in 1853 that “[Nevin] is at the moment wielding more influence than any one theological teacher in the United States”; Muhlenberg, “The Mercersburg Quarterly Review and Dr. Nevin,” 45. Nevin acknowledges and responds to articles about him in prominent periodicals like the \textit{New York Observer, Protestant Banner, Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review}, and many other denominational journals.

In his writing, however, Nevin articulated what he felt was a clear difference between himself and the Oxford Movement: a difference that also transferred directly to his critique of what he generically referred to as Puritanism and the “sect-mind” as well. Nevin’s disgust for Campbellite primitivism was no more pronounced than his rejection of the glamorized elevation of the first four centuries of the Church within the Tractarian apologies. The difference between both the Campbellites’ and Oxford Movements’ repristination efforts and Mercersburg organic development was historical in nature. Put simply, according to Nevin’s colleague Schaff, “Puseyism… looks backwards; we look forwards.” Both the Tractarians and certain evangelicals, confirmed Nevin, sought a “certain golden age, longer or shorter, of comparatively pure religious faith, which truly represented still the simplicity and spirituality of the proper


262 This is not to suggest that Nevin held the same disdain for the Tractarians as he did for “Puritan” primitivism. In his most generous defense of the Oxford Movement, Nevin wrote, “If ever a movement deserved to be honored, for its religious earnestness and for the weight of intellectual and moral capital embarked in it, such title to respect may fairly be challenged by this late revival of the catholic tendency in the English Church. The movement is of far too high and ominous a character, has enlisted in its service far too great an amount of perilous intellect and learning and study… To charge such a movement with puerility, to set it down as destitute of all reason and in full contradiction to the clear sense of religion, as a mere rhapsody of folly without occasion or meaning in the proper history of the Church, is but to make ourselves puerile and silly in the highest degree.” Nevin, “The Anglican Crisis,” 363.

263 Schaff, The Principle of Protestantism as Related to the Present State of the Church, 128. It should be noted that both Schaff and Nevin saw Newman’s conversion as the natural outcome to the wider Tractarian view of history. They viewed Newman as simply following the logic of all Tractarians who “looked backward.” Nevin engages briefly with Newman’s Essay on the Development of Doctrine in his article “Early Christianity.” He is effusive in his praise of the work, writing, “Few theological tracts, in the English language are more worthy of being read, or more likely to reward diligent perusal with lasting benefit and truth” (34). However, he presents two concerns: first, leaning especially on another of his interlocutors, Orestes Brownson, Nevin questions whether Newman’s understanding is, indeed, the true view of the Roman Catholic Church (35); and second, and much more substantially, Nevin sides with the “German ideal of development… [which] is not the same with that presented to us by Dr. Newman” (37). In short, because Newman’s view of development moved “in a line” there was no “possibility of [the Church] growing into anything like Protestantism” (37) and, therefore, it looked back by ruling out the possibility of “action of different forces, working separately to some extent, and so it may be even one-sidedly and contradictorily for a time, toward a concrete result representing in full unity at last the true meaning and power of the whole.” (38). Put rather crudely, one could argue that Nevin preferred the “progress” of Hegelian dialectic to the development of Newman. See also Layman, “Revelation in the Praxis of the Liturgical Community,” 113; Steeper, “Between Mercersburg and Oxford,” 90ff.
divine model of the church [sic].” Nevin was not dismissive of the Church in any era and had no issue upholding the early Church as a positive example, regularly using the early creedal formations and the *regula fidei* as an arsenal against modern “Puritanism.” This “golden age” historicism, however, presumed a fall-narrative of some sort within the tradition – an era or moment when the Church wholly spoiled and lost its true course. It made no difference to Nevin whether this decent into apostasy was traced to the “fourth, or the third, or the second” century or whether it was found immediately after the apostolic period, for the effort to restore the Church of a certain era before it was infected with corruption assumed a discontinuity that he refused to accept. “No defence of Protestantism can well be more insufficient and unsound, than that by which it is set forth as a pure *repristination* simply of what Christianity was at the beginning,” writes Nevin, and no matter what “differences there may be between the first ages and those that followed, it is still plain enough that the course of things was from the very start *towards* that order at least, which afterwards prevailed.”

In other words, there must be a genuine “historical connection with what went before” for the living constitution of Christianity to be found in the Church. In the conclusion of his series on “Early Christianity,” Nevin summarized his understanding this way: “Growth implies unity in

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265 There are too many examples of Nevin’s usage of early creeds and the unwritten *regula fidei* to list here, but for the most explicit examples, see Nevin, “The Apostles’ Creed,” *The Mercersburg Review* 1 (1849): 105-26; 201-21; 313-46; Nevin, “The Anti-Creed Heresy.” Nevin begins his second article of “Thoughts on the Church” by stating bluntly, “Can a sect be *evangelical*, which refuses to accept the Apostles’ Creed as the fundamental symbol of its faith?”: Nevin, “Thoughts on the Church: Second Article,” 383. Although Nevin does not go to great lengths to articulate exactly the *regula fidei*, he is not afraid to correlate it with the Apostles Creed in a rather direct equation, claiming, “Their religion is not in the Bible, because it agrees not with the original *regula fidei* set before us in the Creed”: Nevin, “The Anti-Creed Heresy,” 388.
266 Nevin, “Early Christianity,” 1851, 481.
267 Ibid. Here he is specifically using Evangelical Anglicanism, as espoused by Bishop Wilson, and Tractarianism as examples of how two disparate camps in the same ecclesial body are actually arguing from the same logic, just picking a different *pristine* point in the early Church and a different fall narrative: Ibid., 483–84.
the midst of change. That precisely is what we are to understand by historical development.”

The evangelical Protestantism of Nevin was not, then, the result of pure revolt against the “old Catholic Church,” but manifested itself as its “favorite child” which yet carried within it “terrible defects [of]… malignant diseases, belonging as would seem to its very blood, which are growing always worse and worse, and threaten to bring upon it in the end full dissolution.” The “wholesale and extreme pugnacity” against Roman Catholicism “may be convenient” admitted Nevin, “as it calls for no discrimination, it requires of course neither learning nor thought,” but ultimately cuts itself off at the knees by failing to see that its connection with the purity of the gospel in the Bible was “through the Roman Catholic church [sic] only, as the real continuation of the older system.” Any version of evangelical Christianity that was not built on the “old foundation” of the Catholic Church was nothing more, in Nevin’s estimate, than bastardized Protestantism: “We have read too much church history, and looked too widely into the present state of the world, for that.” Instead of a radical revolution overthrowing the entire system of

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268 Nevin, “Early Christianity,” 1852, 33. Earlier Nevin provided a more filled-out explanatory summation in his preface to Schaff’s *The Principle of Protestantism*, writing, “Assuredly those who hold the idea of historical progress, with any proper knowledge, do not conceive of it as a continuous movement, under the same form, in the same direction. They mean by it only a movement, whose general, ultimate tendency is forwards and not backwards; and which, though it may seem at times to be differently turned, is still found in the end steadily recovering and pursuing its original course; as a stream of water carried aside, or pressed back upon itself, by some obstruction, does but force for itself a more circuitous way, or only gather strength to burst or overflow the barrier, that so it may roll onward as before. Truth can be said to advance, only as error is surmounted and thrown into its rear”: Nevin, “Sermon on Catholic Unity,” in *The Principle of Protestantism as Related to the Present State of the Church*, by Philip Schaff (Chambersburg, PA: “Publication Office” of the German Reformed Church, 1845), 21.

269 Nevin, “Early Christianity,” 1852, 36–37. His defense of Roman Catholicism and even the Papacy became increasingly stronger through the 40s and into the 50s. By the time his denominational antagonist (Dr. Joseph Berg) left the German Reformed Church – taking with him his Nativist views and his vitriolic attitude toward Catholics – Nevin could unflinchingly write, “We do not hold the Papacy, as such, to be the Antichrist. There have been, we doubt not at all, many godly and pious Popes. We do not believe, that the Catholic Church was the synagogue of Satan, for more than a thousand years before the rise of Luther, and that the only true succession of Christianity lay all that time among miserable sects on the outside of it”: Nevin, “Dr. Berg’s Last Words,” 296.


271 Ibid., 553.

272 Nevin, “Dr. Berg’s Last Words,” 296. Nevin’s exact claim is: “We are not willing to bastardize Protestantism itself.”
Roman Catholicism, the proper understanding of the Reformation was summed up by Nevin as follows:

It was merely a disengagement of the old life of the church from the abuses, with which it became burdened in the course of time, and its advancement to a form more congenial, than that which it carried before, with the wants of the modern world. It was no nullification thus of previous history, no return simply to what Christianity [sic] was supposed to have been in the beginning; its connection with that was still through the intervening history of the old Catholic church; and from the bosom of this church it sprang by true living derivation and birth.273

The hope for the Church was not found by looking back for the golden age, nor in whitewashing the evangelical Protestantism of the 19th century, but in a “process of transition only towards a higher and better state of the church, which is still future though probably now near at hand, and the coming of which may be expected to form an epoch in history quite as great at least as that of the Reformation itself.”274

Considering his view of history, Nevin saw the fittingness of biblical interpretation in both its affinity with and distinction from other eras of the life of the Church. Reading and interpreting the Bible for a contemporary 19th-century evangelical theologian would never look identical to the early or medieval church; however, it would also never be unrecognizable. The tradition of the Church was intended to “circumfuse” the reading of the Bible by every Christian, providing a flexible framework that offered broad direction and boundaries in Scriptural interpretation from the “mind of the holy catholic Church.”275 If, in fact, Christianity was a living constitution in the Church, then the Bible itself was a part of the “living tradition” that was handed down through the centuries.276 Accordingly, the place from which the Bible was to be

274 Ibid., 37. This quote also shows how intertwined his doctrines of Scripture, the Church, and the Eschaton were. As with Hodge and Campbell, this section on the Bible and the Church needs to be read in concert with the next section (1.2) on the Millennium and the Church as they bear heavily upon each other.
275 Nevin, Antichrist, 58.
read – the historically-connected, living tradition of the Church – was of the utmost importance. The Bible was not like every other book because its “force” was only operational when it was read and interpreted from that specific place; moreover, if it was “cut off from the living stream of catholic tradition,” the inscripturated Word of God lost its vital connection to the incarnate Word of God.277 There was, in theological language, a perichoretic relationship between the living Scriptures and the living Church – they were not simply mutually informing sources of authority, but divine realities that interpenetrated each other as they unfolded through time.278 Reading the Bible properly meant that the interpreter had to be organically connected to the living constitution of Christianity in the Church through the ages. She or he must be in Christ, which necessarily meant for Nevin that they were in the Church, in order for Scripture to be rightly interpreted. “It is not enough to confess the inspiration of the Scriptures, if it be not with faith first in the Church,” concluded Nevin. “The Bible, great as it is in the scheme of Christianity, could not be substituted for the Church… without violence to the whole order and sense of the Creed.”279

Nevin’s perichoretic relationship between the Church and Scripture was a part of his wider “germ” theory of growth and development. This was a somewhat inevitable corollary to his philosophy of history, as the Bible contained in “element and germ at least the whole theory of the church” which was grown and sharpened through the incubation of the councils, the early creeds, and the Fathers like Cyprian, Tertullian, Irenaeus, Athanasius, Chrysostom, and

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278 The difference between the two “authorities” was that the Church as such actually developed through time, while it was really only the interpretation of Scripture that unfolded, not the Scriptures themselves.
279 Nevin, “Thoughts on the Church: Second Article,” 383.
Augustine. Again, it was an inner vitality that supplied the germination, guided by the providence of God in Christ.

In sum, the connection between Nevin’s understanding and usage of the Bible and its relation to his ecclesiology can be summarized by what it criticized, what it endorsed, and how it manifested itself in his writing. As he did with Hodge, Nevin regularly attempted to call the bluff of his evangelical counterparts by insisting that “No man reads the Bible without a theological habit of some sort, (even if it be that of a Voltaire or Paine only)… Every sect has its symbol, its tradition, written or unwritten… under whose iron yoke, is sung the melancholy song of freedom all the day long.” This reinforced Nevin’s claim that such private judgment could not lead to a unified evangelical ecclesiology (as both Campbell and Hodge assumed), but would be torn asunder by the competing – spoken or unspoken – theological presuppositions. Nevin believed this interpretive illness had an obvious antidote, a theological ressourcement that could supply a universal and explicit interpretative framework.

The retrievalistic hermeneutic endorsed by Nevin was not simply another alternative to the private judgment predilection of his evangelical peers. Rather, it was the natural outcome of both his philosophy of history and his theological insistence on the substantial – perichoretic – connection between the incarnate and inscripturated Word of God in relation to the Church. This was borne forth in Nevin’s writing through extensive use of the theological idea of organic

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282 Nevin, “The Anti-Creed Heresy;” 617. Here he specifically mentions “Campbellites” by name along with Cumberland Presbyterians, Winebrennarians, Baptists, and Puritans.
283 The term ressourcement refers first, and still most commonly, to the so-called Nouvelle Théologie of French (and German) Catholic theology of the pre-Vatican II era. Theologians such as Henri de Lubac, Hans Urs von Balthasar, Yves Congar, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, Karl Rahner, Hans Küng, Edward Schillebeeckx, and Jean Daniélou, among others, were its primary proponents. The rationale for employing it anachronistically here to Nevin – a Protestant American, no less – is simply the primacy of his concern for history and historical sources of the wider Christian tradition. Like the mid-20th-century Roman Catholics, Nevin desired a self-conscious retrieval (reappropriation, reclamation) and rehabilitation of the wider tradition from which his interpretative work could filter through and find its fittingness.
development. The Bible did not detail an ecclesial pattern to be replicated (Campbell), nor were generic principles supplied as broad parameters for ecclesiology which were largely detached from the individual spiritualism of the plan of salvation (Hodge). Instead, for Nevin, the Bible was in an interpenetrative relationship with the Church as a distinct-but-connected instantiation of the Word of God. It guided, corrected, and reformed the Church largely in an implicit way by ruling out unfit expressions, always seeking correspondence with the incarnate Word of God. To accomplish its mandate, Nevin insisted upon a practice of interpretation that did not dissect or neglect portions of the Bible or the Church, but sought a broad *fittingness* within a historical and comprehensive reading of all Scripture. There is no doubt that this approach left the relationship between the Bible and the Church less conceptually clear for Nevin than both Campbell and Hodge’s approaches. Indeed, questions of *how* this operated in real-time interpretation, or *where* the final authority rested in the Church, left Nevin’s proposal largely unengaged by antebellum evangelicals despite its theological richness.

**Summary**

Three evangelical theologians, all with a typically robust view of the nature of Bible, came to very different understandings of how Scripture engaged the Church. Just as in the dispute that led to the Bible Riots in Philadelphia, the issue of “notes” or some form of an interpretive framework – no matter how loosely defined – was at the heart of the differences as Nevin railed against the “private judgment” refrain of many evangelicals. In its place, Nevin put forth a retrievalist proposal that attempted to recover the interpretive framework of the wider Christian tradition, while simultaneously holding a view of ecclesial historical development that was ordered through the mutually informing authorities of the incarnate and inscripturated Word of God. Hodge and Campbell, on the other hand, found themselves in the majority of antebellum evangelicals who wanted to uphold the “without note” reading of the Bible. This did not,
however, lead Campbell and Hodge to a shared understanding of the relationship between the Bible and the Church. Hodge held a dual emphasis on doctrinal and devotional readings of Scripture that both led to a highly individualized faith. This privatization of faith, alongside the generic doctrinal principles of ecclesiology Hodge found in the Bible, assumed both implicitly and explicitly a peripheral soteriological role for the Church. The Bible was for the private use of the individual who was seeking salvation. Conversely, Campbell saw the Church as the vehicle of salvation because of its centrality within the Acts-Epistles canon of the New Testament, which he employed as a kind of constitution for the Christian Age. The Bible told of how the Church needed to be reunited like its constitutional form, in order to be the instrument of salvation for the wider world. Where Hodge extracted generic principles about the Church from Scripture, Campbell found replicable patterns, and Nevin saw not the Church in Scripture, but wanted to bring the whole tradition to bear on the reading and interpretation of Scripture. Notable exceptions withstanding (Nevin), the Bible was the typical place for evangelicals to start in their ecclesiological explorations. The Scriptures were also the place for source material for the discussion of the Last Things, which heavily impacted much of their ecclesiological construction as well. The Scriptural material of the eschaton – in its antebellum evangelical context of interpretation – will be examined next.

Section 2

Millennialism and the Bible Riots: Religious and Nationalistic

As the Protestant crowds collected themselves in an open area market in Kensington on May 6th – intent on reestablishing their nativist pep-rally that had been disbanded by angry Catholics the previous Friday – they were again disrupted, but this time in a more serious fashion
by shots fired from a nearby Irish fire hall (Hibernia Hose Company).\textsuperscript{284} The first at the rally to be struck and mortally wounded was George Shiffler, who, as the story goes, was the flagbearer of the nativists.\textsuperscript{285} The centrality of the flag cannot be missed. In fact, the Monday gathering was spurred on by reports that after scattering the Protestant Nativists on Friday, the Irish Catholics had torn and trampled the flag underfoot. Yet the flag itself was not some sort of religiously neutral nationalistic symbol somehow disentangled from the Protestant-Catholic divide – after all, Shiffler was shot as Lewis C. Levin was on the podium railing against “Popery,” not immigrants.\textsuperscript{286} This goes to the point: the mix of nationalism and religion was so fused in 1844 that one writer at the time was bold enough to conclude that May 6\textsuperscript{th} was the start of another St. Bartholomew’s day,\textsuperscript{287} while a Catholic nun named Sister Gonzaga wrote, “The truth is, it is

\textsuperscript{284} For a near comprehensive collection of material and events related to the Bible Riots, see the website hosted by Falvey Memorial Library at Villanova University: https://exhibits.library.villanova.edu/chaos-in-the-streets-the-philadelphia-riots-of-1844 (accessed November 23, 2016). Also for an in-depth background and chronology of only the May riots, see Kenneth W. Milano, The Philadelphia Nativist Riots: Irish Kensington Erupts (Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2013).

\textsuperscript{285} It is possible that the Irish Catholic Patrick Fisher was shot first. The chronology of events – as in any riot – is difficult to establish, and with the added layer of severe prejudice in the recorders of the riot, the reader must hold lightly to the “facts.” It is doubtful that Shiffler was actually the flagbearer of the Nativists; however, in this case the myth that grew around him and his valiant effort to uphold the national symbol unveils a larger truth that informs the narrative hereafter. There were a reported six to eight hundred people who attended his funeral. Perhaps the most dramatic retelling of Shiffler’s heroism is by Belisle: “Thrice had the flag fallen with young Shiffler who, hurling back his assailants, again raised aloft the stars and stripes, now riddled by the shots that were flying thick and fast around him. His light form dilated, and with flashing eyes he spurned back the miscreants who would have forcibly torn the sacred emblem from his hands. Never had a being occupied a prouder position; never was it more faithfully discharged. For, even then, with his assailants at bay, awed by the heroism so nobly displayed, a ball from the Hose House entered his heart, and he fell as he gasped, ‘Irene! – Mother! – Heaven!’ with his Nation’s flag gathered around him, true to it in death as he had been in life; for when they raised the young martyr his hands were already stiffening in death around it, with it was crimson with his life-blood.” Orvilla S. Belisle, The Arch Bishop: Or, Romanism in the United States, 7th ed. (Philadelphia: W.W. Smith, 1855), 223.

\textsuperscript{286} The presence of Levin brings to the fore the incredible diversity of Protestants who participated in the riots and the truly “Protestant-Catholic” nature of the dispute as opposed to a “Native-Foreigner” dynamic. Levin was a Jewish convert to Episcopalianism, but we also have records of a Swedish Lutheran killed, numerous Irish Presbyterians involved along with British Unitarians, and surprisingly, old world Quakers, as well as numerous other “American” evangelicals like Congregationalists, Methodists, and Christians. As in their homeland, dozens of Irish lined up on either side of the divide, confirming the fundamentally religious character of the riots.

\textsuperscript{287} This call was made by the Native American, May 7, 1844 as found in Billington, The Protestant Crusade, 1800-1860, 225. It was also noted as the call of multiple local papers in a Catholic review of the May riots: “The Philadelphia Anti-Catholic Riots,” Catholic Magazine, June 1844, 380. Hindsight shows just how ridiculous a claim this was, as it was the Protestant majority that desecrated the Catholic minority; yet the absurd comparison to 16\textsuperscript{th}-century France and the “Catholic” persecution of Huguenots was enough to stir Protestants to arms. The same goes for the Protestants who sang “The Boyne Water” as the cross of St. Michael’s Church fell into the flames. The
nothing but a party of Protestants leagued against the Catholics under the name of Native Americans and the Irish.”

The first night of violence during the Bible Riots, May 6th, left the city of Philadelphia in a dizzying stupor the next morning. “Crowds gathered at every corner” to hear of the previous night’s events with rapt attention, “listening to volunteer speakers exhort against Catholicism.”

It did not take long for their indignation over the perceived Catholic imposition to be stirred into action, and groups began to form. Eventually Protestants led small marches on May 7th, rallying around two cries: the blood of their first martyr from the previous night’s shots – young George Shiffler – and second, the growing myth of the torn flag the “Irish Papists” had trampled underfoot. As the crowds coalesced at the State House (now Independence Square) in downtown, numbering between two and three thousand, some insisted on a return to Kensington, where they sought retribution by burning the Hibernia Hose Company and the adjacent Nanny Goat Market along with at least 30 homes in the densely Irish Catholic area. The “friends of the Bible,” indignant and paranoid, as the Catholic Magazine would later mock, used the afternoon and evening of the 7th to make the “most Christian possible use of torch and musket.”

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**Footnotes:**


290 Ibid. The legend of George Shiffler became instant. Poems and songs were composed (and sold on the street corners of Philadelphia) only days later. The account of Shiffler, the innocent and noble flag-bearer, became mythological for the Protestants.

291 Oxx, *The Nativist Movement in America*, 67–68. Oxx notes that at least eight were killed and fourteen injured during the arson spree of the 7th.

The events of May 7th, 1844, in Philadelphia paint a doomsday type scene: pandemonium in the streets, fires ablaze, and sweeping judgments enacted by mobs. This chaotic scene was, in many disturbing ways, consonant with the millennial fervor of antebellum America. As outlined in the section below, there were significant differences between the emerging premillennialists of the evangelical party and the established majority of postmillennialists; however, their internal differences were marginal compared with their shared assumptions. Despite the former group’s growing pessimism over the progress of the gospel and the latter’s indomitable optimism about the progress of society, there was a shared understanding that seismic changes were underway, and the imminent realization of God’s reign was envisioned by both groups. Even postmillennialists were divided among themselves on their interpretation of the riotous events, as some tended to see effects rooted in the “fundamental and irreconcilable differences between [Catholic] principles and those on which [American] social and political institutions repose”, whereas others held a kind of postmillennial apocalypticism where God

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293 The effects of the riots were widespread, with residents as far as Cincinnati warned to stay in their homes and avoid public gatherings. Highlighting the religious nature of the tension, Baughin claims that the Campbell-Purcell debate in 1837 marked the “emergence of fully developed anti-Catholicism in Cincinnati” and claims the effects of the debate continued to be palpable in 1844. Baughin, “The Development of Nativism in Cincinnati,” 242–43.

294 There was certainly a small but important subset of antebellum Protestants who had very little interest in millennialism, as will be shown below with the example of Charles Hodge. Hodge’s aversion—shared especially with some more rationalist Unitarians—pertained to the apocalyptic assumptions of how God engaged and acted in the material world. This was an apocalyptic understanding that marked many post- and nearly all premillennialists of the era. Shea notes how this anti-apocalypticism only heightened Hodge’s immaterial ecclesiology, which will be unpacked in much greater detail within this section, especially in contrast to Nevin’s eclectic postmillennial apocalypticism: Shea, The Lion and the Lamb, 168.

295 Alexander Campbell, “Address,” The Millennial Harbinger, New Series, VII (1843): 208. Some saw the campaign to rid America of Roman Catholicism as a necessary social good just like abolition and prohibition. This group included Campbell and the bulk of the supporters of the Philadelphia-organized, American Protestant Association. Lunger notes that Campbell had “enthusiastic support” for the APA, though Lunger’s conclusion that Campbell—by the 40s—was much more “irenic” is unduly indebted to his “sect-to-denomination” framework. Harold L. Lunger, The Political Ethics of Alexander Campbell (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1954), 120. Nevin too shared in supporting the APA (prior to 1844), writing, “It is gratifying to find, that this important movement still continues to work with wide and salutary impression.” Nevin pointed to the necessity of the organization, claiming, “Had the Church been faithful in the beginning, the Roman Apostacy would not have taken place… There is a danger, actual, great, instant danger, in the circumstances with which we are surrounded [regarding the Roman Catholic Church in America].” Nevin, “American Protestant Association,” The Weekly Messenger, April 26, 1843.
was purging the Church of its imperfections, refining it in a more perfect mold, with less social amelioration and more divine action in dramatic fashion. Either way, the violent and polarizing events of May 7th in the city of brotherly love only served to underscore the shared assumptions of all sides of the millennialist fever that had struck America – the signs of the times were pointing to something at work, which the vast majority of Americans considered to be an indication of the end times.

The Millennial Preoccupation

It may seem that inserting a section on the “millennial preoccupation” of antebellum evangelicals is mandated simply because it was such a buzzworthy topic of the era. That, although being true, is not the reason for discussing it here. In some imperfect way, and precisely because it is a discussion rooted in the last things, the antebellum discourse surrounding the “millennium” is able to open up some ecclesiological vistas or dimensions more organically than

A year before the riots Campbell wrote, “Such an association I have long thought the peculiar signs of the times loudly call for” (182). He also notes that he had proposed a similar organization to “Dr. [Lyman] Beecher” around the time of his debate with Purcell, but the latter, who was known as a vitriolic anti-Catholic polemicist, thought the that “in the openings of Providence the time was not yet come” (183). In affirming that the time had now come for this “great movement” (183), Campbell pointed directly to the activity of Bishop Hughes in New York and the Bible controversy in their public schools – the precursor to the events that spurred the riots in Philadelphia which would take place a year after Campbell’s comments on the formation of the APA. Alexander Campbell, “Protestant Association,” The Millennial Harbinger, New Series, VII (1843): 182–84.

This version of postmillennialism was much more akin to Nevin’s. See the connections in the section below. In some ways, this understanding of postmillennialism shared more in common with premillennialists who held to a more apocalyptic understanding of the way in which God operated in the world. In this way, the “pre” and “post” distinctions are reduced to the understanding of the thousand-year reign, which was of less consequence overall than the manner of God’s acting in the world.

The shared desire to interpret the “signs of the times” was evident. In the Bible Riots this also took on a literal reading of the signs as families took to hanging signs and American flags out of their windows and on their front gates to show their loyalty and to avoid having their homes razed. The scene conjures images of the Hebrew families marking their door posts with the blood of a sacrificial lamb to avoid the angel of death in the final Egyptian plague, only here the divine messengers enacting God’s orders – or so they envisioned – were the Protestant vigilantes. Again, under the heading of misreading the signs, the Protestants were nearly stirred to violent and destructive action later in May as rumors spread about the encoded signs posted around the city which read “Fortunio and the Seven Spirits.” Some were certain these were rallying cries, commissioned and hidden in plain sight by the Pope, for Catholics to rise up in violence. Fortunately, before any action was taken, the fervor was quelled when they realized the signage was simply part of an advertising campaign for a local play. Billington, The Protestant Crusade, 1800-1860, 227. The signs were almost surely linked to Revelation 1:4 with the “seven spirits” before the throne of God in John’s vision (connected with the seven churches). This direct connection, however, is not made by Billington.
an abstracted discussion of the *marks* or the *properties* of the Church. By exploring the theological vision of the end of time-as-we-know-it, the theologians under examination revealed, in part, their ideal Church; and more importantly, they wrestled with what the Church is and does on its way to that ideal. This, for Campbell, involved an extremely activist-type Church along the way, while Hodge’s lack of a millennial vision spoke volumes to his spiritualized ecclesiology; and finally, Nevin’s eclectic philosophy of history informed an atypical evangelical ecclesiology of divine temporal unfolding on a march to the millennial rest.

The May and July Bible Riots in Philadelphia were nearly the perfect midpoint between the final two dates predicted by proto-Adventist William Miller for the Second Coming of Christ: March 21, 1844, and October 22, 1844. Miller’s premillennial fervor and penchant for prophetic prognostication was nothing altogether new in the realm of Christian theology; however, the imminence of the dates he set and an unsuspecting groundswell of popular support led to a surprising number of American “Millerites” or, at least, Miller-sympathizers in the late 1840s.  

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299 For a brief but helpful summary of millennialism in the church, see Ernest R. Sandeen, “Millennialism,” in *The Rise of Adventism: Religion and Society in Mid-Nineteenth-Century America*, ed. Edwin S. Gaustad (New York: Harper & Row, 1974). Though it gets far less attention, the 1840s were also the first instance of Preterism in America. This teaching claims all or part of the Scriptural prophecies have already been fulfilled in the past. It was first introduced by Roman Catholics in the early 17th century in response to Protestants who had been interpreting the “Whore of Babylon” in chapters 17 and 18 of Revelation as the Papacy; however, it was slowly adopted by Protestants who were “weary of the extravagances and the errors of apocalyptic interpreters” (470) as Stuart claims. Robert Townley’s book is the first in America to advocate for such a view (though he eventually abandoned the position) and, in the same year, its Protestant proponents (Firmin Abauzit and J.J. Wetstein) were reviewed by Stuart in his monumental commentary. Moses Stuart, *A Commentary on the Apocalypse* (Andover: Allen, Morrill, and Wardwell, 1845), 470; Robert Townley, *The Second Advent of the Lord Jesus Christ, a Past Event* (London: Simkin, Marshall, 1845).
30s and early 40s. The passing of October 22, 1844, without the perceptible return of Jesus as anticipated by the Millerites, led predictably to public ridicule and even persecution with the appended moniker: “The Great Disappointment.” Although Miller and his followers were the most numerous apocalyptic premillennialist Christians of the time, the antebellum period was chock-full of millennial proposals of all stripes, from Rappites, Mormons, Shakers, and Swedenborgians to even atheists like Robert Owen. As Daniel Walker Howe concludes, “To appreciate the seriousness with which Americans of the early nineteenth century took the millennium, one must enter a world many [contemporary] readers will find alien and full of arcane lore.”

Despite the apocalyptic premillennial commotion caused by the Millerites in the 40s, the most common antebellum theological position, by a significant margin, was

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300 See especially Ruth Alden Doan, “Millerism and Evangelical Culture,” in The Disappointed: Millerism and Millenarianism in the Nineteenth Century, ed. Ronald L. Numbers and Jonathan M. Butler (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1993). The followers of Miller spilled well beyond his Baptist denomination and are difficult to truly enumerate as the majority remained within their denominations. Particularly Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Christians (Connexion), Episcopalians, and Methodists in the north were the most caught up in the apocalyptic premillennial enthusiasm. Part of the draw was the egalitarian nature of the movement, as women and laypeople were prominent leaders. Most recent accounts break with the older historiography that sees the Millerites as socially marginalized outsiders. See Daniel Walker Howe, What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848 (New York: OUP, 2009), 290–91. There were also Millerites in England and Canada; however, Little argues that it was predominantly an American “sectarian” phenomenon. See J.I. Little, “Millennial Invasion: Millerism in the Eastern Townships of Lower Canada,” in Anglo-American Millennialism, from Milton to the Millerites, ed. Richard Connors and Andrew Colin Gow (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2004). I will use the term “Millerite” to refer to these Adventist evangelicals for two reasons. First, it distinguishes them from later (postbellum) Adventists, of which there were two major groups, both of which had significant doctrinal distinctions from the followers of Miller in the antebellum era. Second, because referring to them as “Adventists” suggests something much too cohesive and formal, whereas the evangelicals who followed Miller were scattered and diverse, only coalescing around the peculiar predictions of Miller’s prophetic interpretations. The term “Millerite” is in no way intended to be pejorative, despite the fact that it was used that way originally and disavowed by Miller and his followers.

301 George R. Knight, Millennial Fever and the End of the World: A Study of Millerite Adventism (Boise, Idaho: Pacific Press, 1993); Rowe, God’s Strange Work. Knight notes that a group in Canada was driven out and shot at (223). He also calls October 23, 1844 – the day following Miller’s prediction of October 22 – “Black Wednesday.” Rowe claims that the disappointment was so crushing for Miller and his close followers that, in some way, the “world did indeed come to an end on October 22, 1844,” 192.

302 Robert Kieran Whalen, “Millenarianism and Millennialism in America 1790-1880” (Ph.D., State University of New York at Stony Brook, 1972), 44. Whalen notes that these millennial programs ran the gamut from believing it was complete, to in progress, to churchly or secular. Coincidentally, 1844 (June 27) also marks the year that Mormon leader Joseph Smith was killed. See also Howe, What Hath God Wrought, 292–304.

postmillennialism. Not to overstate the distinction, both pre- and postmillennialists in the antebellum age were building their eschatological cases on the same consensus: “The Bible did contain a unified and accurate set of predictions.” The difference was simply how they interpreted the particular scriptures they deemed pertinent to the return of Christ. The postmillennialism of the antebellum period was partly inherited from the Puritans, then nurtured and nuanced by Edwards and the early evangelicals of the 18th century. Building from this 18th-century postmillennialism, as historian Timothy Smith notes, was the revival context of the early 19th century that led to increased participation in “moral crusades” for social amelioration. This impulse toward societal betterment fed a surge of interest, and by the 1830s there was a “flowering” of this postmillennialism among Christians in nearly every geographical portion of the country. The postmillennialism of antebellum theology was rooted firmly in the sanguinity of the American Jacksonian Age, an age once described as when “wise men hoped.”

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304 One anonymous antebellum theologian was bold enough to write, “[Postmillennialism] is the commonly received doctrine of the present time, and was, I have no doubt, the doctrine of the Apostles.” See “ART. IV.—History of Opinions Respecting the Millennium,” The American Theological Review (1859-1862), no. 4 (November 1859): 642.


306 At the centre of this debate was Revelation 20 and the interpretation of the “thousand years.”


308 Timothy L. Smith, “Righteousness and Hope: Christian Holiness and the Millennial Vision in America, 1800-1900,” American Quarterly 31, no. 1 (April 1, 1979): 21–22; cf: Nathan O. Hatch, “The Origins of Civil Millennialism in America,” in Reckoning with the Past: Historical Essays on American Evangelicalism from the Institute for the Study of American Evangelicals, ed. D. G. Hart (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1995). It is true that not all Puritans were postmillennial, just as not all Puritans were Calvinist, but the majority were both postmillennial and Calvinist.

309 This phrase was coined by Alfred North Whitehead, but has been borrowed by many others. See Sidney E. Mead, The Lively Experiment: The Shaping of Christianity in America (Wipf & Stock, 2007), 90ff; Howe, What Hath God Wrought, 289.
others, the jarring affront of death, war, and social detriments (such as alcohol, gambling, and slavery) made the “hope” a distant reality that was, indeed, to be “hoped” for. These two subsets of antebellum evangelicals – the optimist and the hopeful realist – were, however, ideal types. The most common Christians were attempting to hold and process both impulses within themselves. It was a peculiar mix of optimism and cognitive dissonance that was fed and nurtured both socio-politically and theologically by an “Evangelical United Front” of churches and voluntary societies.  

As Winthrop Hudson puts it, it was “a vision of future greatness born of expectations bred by a contemplation of a vast continent to be settled and nourished by the millennial hopes of evangelical religion.” The interrelation or overlap of American civil millennialism and theological postmillennialism is not always clearly decipherable during this period, but it is an important intersection that will be discussed below in relation to both Campbell and Nevin.

The most basic tenets of the 19th-century postmillennial position were simply “that at some period, yet future, the influence of the great Deceiver upon the earth will be restrained; the Spirit of God will be remarkably poured out; the religion of Christ will spread everywhere; and his spiritual reign will be complete and universal.” There were, of course, more and less detailed accounts of this unspecified chronology. Would the Second Advent of Christ be silent or

310 The classic monograph on this theological and socio-political convergence is Ernest Lee Tuveson, Redeemer Nation: The Idea of America’s Millennial Role (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968). The periodization of the Jacksonian Age is used loosely here. The ending of the two-party system in 1854 and even (surprisingly?) the Civil War did not immediately reverse the fortunes of postmillennialism. It was not until the popularity of John Nelson Darby’s dispensational premillennialism among conservatives of the Gilded Age that postmillennialism faded (though never disappeared) among evangelicals. For the title “Evangelical United Front” see Charles I. Foster, An Errand of Mercy; the Evangelical United Front, 1790-1837 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1960). More recently Howe’s chapter on “Pursuing the Millennium” has reinforced these ideas: Howe, What Hath God Wrought, 286–327.


cataclysmic; gradual or swift; near or distant; datable or mysterious? More to the point, how those questions related to the ecclesiology of antebellum evangelicals is of primary concern here.

It is no surprise, considering their context, that Campbell, Hodge, and Nevin were all to be found in the postmillennial company of antebellum theologians. This is not to claim that the three contemporaries were of one voice on millennial topics, but only to broadly collect them into a recognizable subset of American evangelicals. The differences were many and the effects upon their ecclesiology were significant. To begin, two of the theologians under examination were emblematic of the wider theological scene by how much they wrote on millennial themes, while the third was near silent on the issue. The least occupied with millennialism was not Nevin, as might be expected from his role as the “relentless critic of American Protestantism.”

It was Hodge, despite the fact that in his ~140 articles published in the BRPR he appeared to have responded to everything within the American, British, and German theological worlds. Yet something as significant as hundreds of thousands of people in his own country predicting the imminent return of Christ did not garner a single directed theological response. The shocking

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313 The first three of these dichotomies are highlighted by Sandeen in his survey of 19th-century postmillennial theology: Sandeen, “Millennialism,” 105-06.

314 Randall Balmer, “Critical Junctures in American Evangelicalism: The Transition from Postmillennialism to Premillennialism,” Ashland Theological Journal 38 (2006): 52. Balmer jests that the premillennial vs. postmillennial debate in antebellum America may seem to be the “unfortunate detritus of people with too much time on their hands,” but acknowledges the “enormous repercussions” on evangelical theology of the day.

315 The only disagreement on this point is whether Hodge is truly a postmillennialist or, as Gutjahr attempts to brand him (anachronistically?), an amillenialist. Although Hodge is certainly not as preoccupied with these issues, as will be shown, it seems clear from the few remarks he does make on the “Second Advent” that he is a postmillennialist, even if he is unconvinced that the “millennium” refers to a literal thousand years. See Gutjahr, Charles Hodge, Guardian of American Orthodoxy, 205.

316 B. A Gerrish, Thinking with the Church: Essays in Historical Theology (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 201. In a chapter that examines both Hodge and Nevin, Gerrish calls them “diametrically opposed” (200), with Hodge obsessing over Christ’s death (atonement) and Nevin over Christ’s life (incarnation).

317 Moorhead, “Apocalypticism in Mainstream Protestantism,” in The Continuum History of Apocalypticism, ed. Bernard McGinn et al. (A&C Black, 2003), 474. The total number of Millerites could have been over a million according to Moorhead.
dearth of material Hodge produced on millennial themes in general is not, however, incidental to his understanding of the Church, and it affords a helpful launching point for this section.  

**Hodge: Spiritualized History and the Eschaton**

Archibald Alexander, the first professor of Princeton Seminary and Charles Hodges’ mentor, claimed that the study of unfulfilled prophecy was the work of “unsteady people.” If there was one thing that Hodge did not want to be known for or want his precious institution (Princeton Seminary) known for, it was being “unsteady.” Still, at first, it is shocking to consider that Hodge’s only substantial published discussions on the theme of the “Second Advent” in his antebellum writings are found in his Biblical commentaries, not in his theological treatises, articles, or reviews. Though it may not explain the extent of the millennial silence

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318 Hodge almost never talks about “millenarian” theology and does not use “millennial” when referring to his own theological positions. During the antebellum period, when millennial speculation is at its peak, Hodge says even less about these issues and prefers to talk sparingly about the “Second Advent” of Jesus. One biographer calls Hodge’s eschatology “anemic,” while another scholar refers to his millennial position as “agnostic millennialism.” See respectively Paul C. Gutjahr, *Charles Hodge, Guardian of American Orthodoxy* (Oxford: OUP, 2011), 205; John Wheeler Auxier, December 1, 2015, email to author.

319 As found in Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism*, 167. The depth of Charles’ indebtedness to Alexander goes beyond the realm of theological education, though it obviously includes that as well. For instance, Charles named one of his sons Archibald Alexander (A. A.) Hodge because of Alexander’s paternal-like status in the life of Charles, who had lost his biological father before the age of one. See Gutjahr, *Charles Hodge, Guardian of American Orthodoxy*.


321 Hodge does have a respectably sized section in his *Systematic Theology* vol. 3 on the Second Advent (Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson Publishers, 1999), 790–880. The section, though much more extensive, is almost identical to his son’s *Outlines in Theology* portion on the “Second Advent,” which is not surprising since A. A. Hodge claims that this portion of his work was copied directly from lecture notes taken in the 1850s in his father’s class. This is corroborated by two unpublished lectures found in the Princeton Seminary Library Archives. All this
amidst the freneticism of “The Great Disappointment” or the obsession of other postmillennial evangelicals, there is a certain logic to Hodge’s lack of acknowledgment. The aversion to millennial topics was rooted, for Hodge, in a material-spiritual dualism that Nevin calls “hyperspiritualism” or “rationalism.”322 The dualism is easily discernable in Hodge’s accusation that Millerism and other chiliastic schemas were simply forms of “modified Judaism.”323 He sees the anticipation of an earthly kingdom of the Messiah as one of the “grossest follies of the Talmudical writers” – because they do not realize that Jesus’ mission was to bring a spiritual kingdom.324 These 19th-century millenarian (premillennial) Christians, according to Hodge, were making the same mistake in anticipating the Second Advent as the Jews made with the First Advent, by looking for a kingdom that was too “earthly.”325 Moorhead captures this critique well, stating that “Millenarians” according to Hodge-like thinkers

read the New Testament through the eyes of the Old Testament, rather than vice versa. To long for a thousand years during which King Jesus literally occupied a throne in

combines to speaks to the lack of change in Hodge’s millennial thinking between ante and postbellum contexts, as well as the coherence on this topic amongst the faculty at the Seminary: Archibald Alexander Hodge, Outlines of Theology: Rewritten and Enlarged (New York: Carter and Brothers, 1878), 7, 566–76; Charles Hodge, “Second Advent” (Princeton, NJ, December 1, 1846), Box 2:22, The Charles Hodge Manuscript Collection, Princeton Theological Seminary Libraries; Charles Hodge, “Final Judgment” (Princeton, NJ, December 8, 1846), Box 2:23, The Charles Hodge Manuscript Collection, Princeton Theological Seminary Libraries.322 Nevin, Antichrist, 59. It may seem odd to use hyperspiritualism (italics in the original) and “rationalism” synonymously for the 21st-century reader. However, Nevin uses both to explain the aversion among evangelicals toward the material world in general: “For Rationalism… has two sides, two opposite poles of unbelief, that are forever playing into each other with wonderful readiness and ease; an abstract naturalism on the one hand, that owns no reality higher than the present world; and then an abstract spiritualism on the other hand, by which the sense of the supernatural is not allowed to come to any real union with the sense of the natural in the way of faith, but is made to float over it fantasticaly in the way of mere Gnostic imagination.” Nevin, “Natural and Supernatural,” The Mercersburg Review 11 (April 1859): 204. This, of course, becomes the basis for his infamous sacramental debate with Hodge in the late 40s and early 50s.323 Charles Hodge, An Exposition of the First Epistle to the Corinthians. (New York: Carter, 1857), 328–30.324 Hodge, A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, 428. The original commentary was produced by Hodge in the 30s and was in constant revision and reprint until the1950s.325 Hodge, An Exposition of the First Epistle to the Corinthians, 330. Hodge explains that there will be an abrogation of the “earthly conditions” of the world at the Second Advent. He does, however, remain uncharacteristically humble in his interpretation of this passage and leaves room for other possible readings. Unlike the generic umbrella term “millennial,” the term “millenarian” is reserved exclusively for the “premillennial” interpretation of the millennium. Thus, there are millenarians and postmillenialists who are both considered millenialists, but who understand the thousand-year reign in different ways. Because of the antebellum context, I have used millenarian, Millerite, and premillenialist synonymously.
Jerusalem was to confound the carnal types of prophecy with their spiritual antitype, to confuse shadow with substance. In so doing, millenarians conformed Jesus to the erroneous conceptions of his first-century contemporaries.  

Furthermore, in Hodge’s view, it was a logical (and theological) fallacy to assume that the spiritual nature of the eschaton could be induced by, or connected to in any way, anything that was material. The material history of the world, including the visible Church, could have no bearing whatsoever on the Second Advent of Christ – which, though it would be a visible coming, was an event of purely spiritual import.

Hodge’s repugnance for exegetical literalism within the prophetic corpus of Scripture and his metaphysical dualism left him on the outside of the evangelical postmillennial trend that understood the millennium as the “climax and goal of human progress, with human effort contributing to the realization of God’s providential design.” The peculiarity of Hodge’s millennialism, particularly when measured against his surrounding evangelical culture, reinforces the consequence of his spiritualization of the nature of the Church. The visible church in history was not instrumental in hastening the Second Advent, largely because it did not find its telos in the immaterial, spiritualized eschatology of Hodge’s theology of salvation. The visible church, as with the visible Second Coming of Christ, was present alongside the invisible church.

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and the spiritual Kingdom of God, but this coincidence appeared to be no more than a
hermeneutical necessity. Scripture attests to their coincidental arrival and, therefore, it must be
true, but neither the visible church nor the material coming of Christ appear to bear any integral
connection (causal or otherwise) to the salvific import of the spiritual kingdom and the invisible
church. In light of this, it seems fitting that Hodge would downplay his postmillennialism and all
but ignore the millennial preoccupation of other antebellum theologians, churchmen, and the
laity.\(^{328}\)

**Campbell: Evangelization and Social Amelioration**

When Campbell discontinued his editorial efforts in *The Christian Baptist*, he had far
from finished his journalistic endeavors. The appellation *The Millennial Harbinger* for his next
publication in 1830 may have been reconsidered if he could have foreseen the impact of the
Millerite movement before William Miller began writing in 1836. Nonetheless, the journal title
was deliberate and meaningful to the crusader as he wrote in the prospectus,

> [This journal] shall have for its object the development [sic] and introduction of that
> political and religious order of society called THE MILLENNIUM, which will be the
> consummation of that ultimate amelioration of society proposed in the Christian
> Scriptures.\(^{329}\)

Already in 1830 Campbell could describe – without further comment – the composition of the
millennium as both political and religious. The relationship and meaning of these two millennial
ingredients are more challenging to untangle than one might expect, and varied interpretations of

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\(^{328}\) Auxier, “Princetonian Eschatology, 1812-1878: The Neglect of the Apocalypse,” 42 note 62. He never
writes a single article on these topics in the *BRPR*, and in his *Retrospect* he omits it from the “vital subjects” the
journal covered. Despite this, Auxier keenly notes, the journal did print many articles on the topic without
acknowledgement from Hodge, making his silence speak louder than he may have even anticipated.

turns out to be apropos of the journal content likely even more than Campbell had anticipated, whether it was in
positive support of postmillennialism or in sharp critique of those “Bastard Millennials [sic]”: Alexander
Millennarins [sic]” to the Millerites, but from the context, Campbell is either referring exclusively to Owenite
millennial theory or to Owenite, Mormons (specifically his former “Disciples” colleague Sidney Rigdon, whom he
credits with writing the Book of Mormon), and Millerites collectively. Mark G. Toulouse, “Campbell and
Postmillennialism: The Kingdoms of God,” *Discipliana* 60, no. 3 (Fall 2000): 82.
the two components within Campbell’s writing have persisted.

Out of the debate have arisen two loose but discernable interpretive schools of thought. On the one hand are those such as Hughes and Allen who believe that “Protestant America steadily displaced the primitive church as midwife for the millennial age” in Campbell’s thought. They concur with Tuveson at many points, agreeing that “No other preacher more completely fused the religious and secular elements of the millennial utopia; none more strongly emphasized the need for social reform as preparation for the great age.” On the other hand, those such as Toulouse have claimed that a unified Church remained the “millennial harbinger” and the instrument through which God’s progressive heilsgeschichte would be culminated in the millennial society? The crux of the difference lies in whether or not, over time, Campbell demurred from his particular ecclesiological reformation and instead promoted a more generic pan-Protestant and political means of ushering in the thousand-year reign. Did Campbell’s primitivist ecclesiology turn to a presentist civil religion? A closer examination of Campbell and his millennial interpreters

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330 Toulouse claims, “Between 1830 and 1860, Campbell wrote enough material in the Millennial Harbinger related to prophecy, providence, the future life, the second coming, and the millennium to fill two very large books”: Toulouse, “Campbell and Postmillenialism: The Kingdoms of God,” 82.


suggests a much more mutually informing model of Campbell’s political and religious millennial image, even if he was inconsistent and appeared to contradict himself at points.\textsuperscript{334}

Finally, the question remains as to whether Hughes and Allen have sympathetically understood Campbell on his own terms or whether their interpretation is driven by both a Niebuhrian “sect-to-denomination” interpretation and a Bellah-Mead civil religion (or “religion of the Republic”) lens.\textsuperscript{335} One imposition of these interpretive paradigms is an assumption that when Campbell uses “Protestant” he is referring to a quasi-civil religion entity that is comprised of a cohesive-though-diverse group of Christian denominations. Campbell, however, calls the

\textsuperscript{334} In direct opposition to their thesis, Hughes and Allen admit in a footnote that Campbell’s particular ecclesiology continued to drive his millennial thinking “to varying degrees throughout his life.” Hughes and Allen, \textit{Illusions of Innocence}, 276n61. Toulouse, too, nuances his account, suggesting that Campbell’s writing led in a political direction that could have “opened the door” for future Disciples to interpret his eschatology in an American exceptionalism manner, rooted in a form of civil religion. Toulouse’s insistence, moreover, that in Campbell himself there is no explicit reference to America or the Anglo-Saxon race “bringing the millennium” is only drawn from the \textit{MH} and does not claim to speak for all of Campbell’s writing. Toulouse, “The Kingdom of God and Disciples of Christ,” 6. While I have found no verbatim quotes of Campbell claiming that the Anglo-Saxon race is “bringing the millennium,” there are certainly numerous statements that come close or allude to such an equation. In one of the bolder examples, Campbell claims, “In our country’s destiny is involved the destiny of Protestantism, and in its destiny that of all the nations of the world. God has given, in awful charge, to Protestant England and Protestant America – the Anglo-Saxon race – the fortunes, not of Christendom only, but of all the world” (\textit{PLA}, 179). While the term “millennium” is not employed, it is difficult to read and interpret this in any other fashion.

Conversely, Hughes and Allen rely heavily on Campbell’s \textit{Popular Lectures and Addresses (PLA)}, a series of speeches given in diverse settings to mostly pan-Protestant audiences. The \textit{PLA} are unquestionably more socio-political in content and generic in religious perspective, providing Hughes and Allen with their most convincing quotations about Campbell “pinning his millennial hopes on the Republic.” Hughes and Allen, \textit{Illusions of Innocence}, 276n61. So while Toulouse may be correct in his interpretation of the \textit{MH}, he does not claim to speak about Campbell’s entire corpus; and Hughes and Allen’s research may not be as representative of Campbell as it appears, because of their disproportionate weight on the \textit{PLA}. Furthermore, other voices, such as Crowley and Watts’ more recent research, suggest that Hughes and Allen have oversold the transference from church to state in the 1830s. Tim Crowley, “A Chronological Delineation of Alexander Campbell’s Eschatological Theory from 1823-1851,” \textit{Discipliana} 54, no. 4 (Winter 1994); Craig M. Watts, “Millennial America and the Vision of Place in the Thought of Alexander Campbell,” \textit{Discipliana} 62, no. 1 (2002): 25–31. The former sees the outright shift much later (‘51) and lasting much shorter (~8-10 years) with the ’30-’50 period mixed with mostly ecclesial and some political millennial rhetoric, while the latter is even more nuanced, seeing the mix of two related millennial visions beginning in the mid-40s and Campbell “never [repudiating] his belief in the centrality of the restored church in preparing the world for the millennium.” Ibid., 25.

\textsuperscript{335} The Niebuhrian thrust clearly comes through in Hughes and Allen’s reliance on Lunger’s interpretation of Campbell. Lunger sees Campbell as a prime example of H. Richard Niebuhr’s sect-denomination typology, moving from “left-wing Protestantism” to “Denominationalism.” See Lunger, \textit{The Political Ethics of Alexander Campbell}. The civil religion emphasis in Hughes and Allen comes directly from their shared teacher Sidney Mead, to whom their book is dedicated. If it is not made entirely explicit in Hughes and Allen, Whitson does just that and takes many of the formers’ interpretations to a more explicit end: “Campbell’s Post-Protestantism and Civil Religion.”
word “Protestant” an “abstract, anomalous noun substantive” that is understood in “degrees.”\footnote{Campbell, \textit{Popular Lectures and Addresses}, 168.} Additionally, he says there are three “species” of Protestants: political, ecclesiastic, and spiritual. On one hand, he can sound quite on the mark with Hughes and Allen’s reading, saying things like,

> To Britain and America God has granted the possession of the new world… Doubtless these are but preparations for a work which God has in store for us, - a great, a mighty, a stupendous work, that will bring into requisition the arts, the sciences and the resources with which he has so richly, so simultaneously and so marvelously endowed England and America… And this I ascribe, not so much to soil or climate, or national superiority, or blood, as I do the fact that these are the lands of Bibles and Protestantism.\footnote{Ibid., 170–71.}

On the other hand, he quickly adds that Protestantism is not something positively identifiable, but the act of “protest\[ing\] against” something or someone: in essence, the “negation of human dictation.”\footnote{Ibid., 171.} Thus, while Hughes and Allen speak of “Protestant America” in Campbell as something that ushers in the millennium, in reality, for Campbell, Protestantism generally has more to do with a posture or an attitude toward political, ecclesiastical, and spiritual constriction.\footnote{At points like this, Campbell’s reliance and almost unquestioned enthusiasm for the religious and political philosophy of John Locke are obvious. There are other “protestors” and thinkers that Campbell relies heavily upon such as Milton, Bacon, Reid, Newton, and even Franklin, but none compare with his beloved Locke! For his most explicit and developed examples, see “Responsibilities of Men of Genius”; “Literature, Science, and Art”; and “Importance of Uniting Moral with the Intellectual Culture of the Mind” in Campbell, \textit{Popular Lectures and Addresses}.} Just so, Campbell concludes a six-part series on the “Millennium” – in the middle of his supposedly most secular decade of millennial visions – by concluding, “Oh, for another Luther to lash the false Protestantism of pretended protestants, and to expose the hypocrisy, cant and formality of these sanctimonious priests.”\footnote{Campbell, “Millennium,” 702.} Making an explicit connection to his motivation for beginning the journal in 1830, Campbell reminds his readers after more than two and a half decades, “The Millennial Harbinger was conceived and born under the conviction and influence
of this view of dilapidated and prostrated christendom [sic].”\textsuperscript{341} What Campbell meant by Christendom here is the connection between the state and the church in what he saw as a crude Erastianism. In the Anglo-American world, he saw this as fading quickly and leading the way for the rest of the Western world. In other words, the ecclesial reformation he promoted with his journal many years earlier was rooted in a belief that Christendom was collapsing and a united church was needed to usher in the millennium. That vision of a \textit{semper reformanda} church remained central to Campbell’s ecclesiology until he died.\textsuperscript{342} So while Hughes and Allen’s work remains insightful and a convincing exploration into the expanding political realm of Campbell’s millennium, their thesis of a near-total transference of millennial hope from the church to the nation appears sorely overstated.

It is at this intersection that Campbell’s millennial theology deeply informs his ecclesiology. Campbell viewed the church as having a “missional vocation of global significance” in which there was a shared “sense of being a part of God’s work in the world.”\textsuperscript{343} So while Campbell vociferously argued against millenarian positions, and against Miller himself, it is most often the ecclesial posture of the premillennialists that he decries rather than their

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{341} Ibid., 699.
\item \textsuperscript{342} While some 21\textsuperscript{st}-century readers may feel that he is simply proposing a new model of Christendom with a united church that converts the world and ushers in the millennium, the fact that it is a “free” (or truly protestant) and not a legislated church with confessional tests (anti-Erastian and anti-confessional) means for Campbell that is the opposite of Christendom.
\item For Campbell on \textit{semper reformanda}, see Richard L. Harrison Jr., “Nailed to the Church Door: How Protestant Was Alexander Campbell’s Reform?,” in \textit{Lectures in Honor of the Alexander Bicentennial, 1788-1988} (Nashville, TN: Disciples of Christ Historical Society, 1988), 60. Although Bishop Purcell regularly refers to him as a “champion of Protestantism” in their debate, Campbell is also wary of those Protestants who in “running out of Babylon, run past Jerusalem.” See respectively Campbell and Purcell, \textit{A Debate on the Roman Catholic Religion}, 54, 222, 235, 288; Alexander Campbell, “Response to Dr. Channing - No. II,” \textit{The Millennial Harbinger}, III, VII, no. IX (1850): 495. Lester suggests that the Civil War destroys the millennial outlook of Campbell; however, there is not enough evidence to substantiate this. See Lester, “Alexander Campbell’s Millennial Program,” 39.
\item \textsuperscript{343} Anthony L. Dunnavant, “Evangelization and Eschatology: Lost Link in the Disciples Tradition?,” \textit{Lexington Theological Quarterly} 28, no. 1 (1993): 50. It is interesting here that in the early 1990s Dunnavant uses the term “missional” to describe Campbell’s understanding. The term only became common in the late 90s and popular in the 2000s. It is a prescient term for Campbell’s ecclesiology and one which will be engaged later in the dissertation.
\end{itemize}
hermeneutic peculiarity, unlike Hodge whose sparing critiques of the premillennialists were entirely based on Scriptural interpretation. Campbell railed against Miller because the latter’s millennium “promises least of blessing to the human race” having no “object in view” as its “commencement is the end of conversion.” The Sage of Bethany, however, understood the ongoing reforming of the church – expressed preeminently in its unity – as the very evangelization (or re-evangelization) of a dying Christendom which will induce the “golden…and blissful period in history.” Sprinkle may overstate the utilitarian nature of Campbell’s restorationism, but he correctly identifies the weightiness of his millennial theology as it impinged upon his doctrine of the church:

His passion never really lay in the restoration of the church of the past. Instead… [it was] an eschatological strategy in service to the high calling of his Millennial Lord, who himself was coming to meet his church, the Millennial Church.

Conversely, Millerites, according to Campbell, saw no reason to continue to evangelize, saw only incidental use for the church, and certainly did not believe that collectively the uniting and ever-reforming church would bring about the Second Coming that was so imminently awaited.

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344 Despite Campbell’s obsession over biblical hermeneutics, he uses this approach to counter the Millerites far less than he points out the impracticality of their quietist posture. In fact, Campbell was known for some dalliances with prophetic prognostication himself. Perhaps the most unfortunate was the one-time prediction that the “cleansing of the temple” would occur in 1866 (a distinct event from the Second Coming in salvation history), which ultimately coincided with the year of his death. This was a point that the 1910 edition of the Encyclopædia Britannica did not fail to miss. Overall, however, Campbell was largely dismissive of biblical mathematics in either the Millerite or Ussherian style. He concluded a review of Miller’s dating schema at one point sounding very much like Hodge, “The result of my examination of the chronology of the world is the full and fixed conviction that it is lost forever… Soft words and hard arguments is a good maxim. Modest assertions and ample demonstrations; the premise first – the conclusion afterwards; weak in assumption – strong in proof; ask no favors, and give no offences, are aphorisms in argument; and certainly on the recondite and always more or less mysterious subject of prophecy, they are peculiarly apposite”: Campbell, “The Coming of the Lord - No. I,” The Millennial Harbinger, New Series, V, no. I (January 1841): 9–10; Campbell, “The Coming of the Lord - No. XVII,” The Millennial Harbinger, New Series, VI, no. VII (July 1842): 305, 308. See also Randy Todd, “Did Alexander Campbell Predict 1866 as the Year of Christ’s Coming?” Stone-Campbell Journal 11, no. 1 (2008): 29–45.


346 Campbell, Popular Lectures and Addresses, 69.

347 Sprinkle, Disciples and Theology, 38.

348 Campbell does admit that he has read at least two of Miller’s works in order to be “one of those who read both sides of all important questions”: Campbell, “The Coming of the Lord - No. III,” The Millennial Harbinger, New Series, V, no. III (March 1841): 103-04. He even reprinted letters from Miller and his promoter, Dr.
The primacy of the church in the millennial vision of Campbell is highlighted in his 1852 address to the Bible Union Convention. Again, in Campbell’s supposedly most blatant period of transferring the millennial hope from the church to the American nation, he boldly proclaims: “If, then, the Christian church ever become really and visibly one, she must have one immersion, or one baptism; and, if she become not one, where is the hope of a millennium? It is a dream!”

And, if the essential connection between church and the coming millennium is not clear enough, he follows with an even more direct equation: “There cannot be a millennium – a united church – without acknowledging one Lord, one faith and one baptism.”

For Campbell, the import of the millennium was not completely spiritualized or other-worldly as it was with Hodge, but rather it was entrenched within the very materiality of the created world and its cultural milieu. As Campbell puts it, the millennium is not a speculative subject, but “highly practical.” In Campbell’s most famous description of the millennium, he weaves material and spiritual concerns together in a way that would seem unfathomable to a thinker like Hodge:

The millennium… [will be] a state of greatly enlarged and continued prosperity, in which the Lord will be exalted and his divine spirit enjoyed in an unprecedented measure. All the conditions of society will be vastly improved; wars shall cease, and peace and good will among men will generally abound… Genuine Christianity will be diffused through all nations; crimes and punishments will cease; governments will recognize human rights, and will rest on benevolent principles… The seasons will become more mild; the climates more salubrious, health more vigorous, labor less, lands more fertile, and the animal creation more prolific: for the knowledge of the glory of God shall cover the whole earth as the waters cover the channel of the sea. The millennium is to precede the coming of the Lord.

349 Campbell, Popular Lectures and Addresses, 594.
350 Ibid.
This quote began a series in the MH titled “The Coming of the Lord” that stretched over three years and contained 26 articles all focused on Campbell’s eschatological theology.353

So while Hodge’s understanding of the millennium and the church’s relation to it floated above the messiness of the world in a safe spiritual realm – apolitical, ahistorical and immaterial – Campbell’s trudged through the minutia of this-worldly events on its way to the salubrious state – political, material, and historical – which preceded the coming of the Lord.354 We return to where we began with Campbell in the “Prospectus” of his Millennial Harbinger and the mingling together of the political and spiritual realities that the advent of the millennial age initiates. This mixed millennium – spiritual and material – unveils something very central and telling about Campbell’s wider ecclesiology, which gets at the very nature of the church through its mission: the twofold mission of the church is to enter into and embody the reign of the King in his Kingdom through social justice and evangelization.355 This dual-focused mission of the church, however, is often muted in those who have written on Campbell’s ecclesiology because the focus is directed toward his preparatory moves of restoration and unity.356

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353 I have not found another single series of articles that covered more pages in Campbell’s writing. The articles started in January 1841 and ended in October 1843, with each article ranging from just under ten pages to over twenty with extracts from other writers included.

354 Campbell makes the ecclesial and political connection explicit, writing, “That Protestantism is essential to political liberty, is the best-substantiated fact in the annals of European nations.” Campbell, Popular Lectures and Addresses, 174. Howe calls postmillennial thinking the “capstone” of an intellectual system that was grounded in political liberalism, economic development, and Protestant thought: Howe, What Hath God Wrought, 287.

To categorize Hodge’s ecclesiology as “floating above the messiness of the world in a safe spiritual realm” is by no means to suggest that Hodge ignored or was ignorant of the “messiness” of the material world. In fact, his motivating factor appears to be just the opposite. History and human fallibility were so apparent to Hodge that he felt it necessary to abstract the Church from such a soiled physical world. The intractable sinfulness of humanity made it impossible for Hodge to think of the visible Church as a harbinger for the “salubrious state.” This rationale is not explored further here as it is picked up more fully in chapter 2 (especially section 2).

355 The choice of “social justice” here is perhaps anachronistic, but fundamentally it is an attempt to modernize language that Campbell would have readily agreed with in order to clearly display the material connection with some 21st-century evangelical terminology. As noted below, Campbell’s equivalent term would have been the “amelioration of society.”

356 This is not to say that Campbell does not work for the restoration and unity of the church. These two things, of course, take up most of his time and energy and dominate his writing, but they are not the mission of the church. Rather they happen to be the proper form (unity) and the most pragmatic way of finding that form (restoration). The mission of the church has an ambivalent relationship with the form, as social justice and
the church is social activism and evangelization with both the means and goal of that mission being ecclesial unity built on a platform of restoration, then a true church must be the one that is actively engaged in being the sign, witness, and foretaste of that vision. The church is not only implicated in the history and materiality of the world, but just so, it is an activist institution, occupied with the very bringing about of that golden age by recognizing and joining the missio Dei. The millennium is an apocalyptic “gift of grace” without question in Campbell’s writing, but it is also a “call to participate in the reconciliation of the whole world to God.” The way one participates is through the work of the church in the amelioration of society and the preaching of Jesus Christ – deed and word ministry.\footnote{Sprinkle, “Alexander Campbell and the Doctrine of the Church,” 23. See also Leypoldt, “Radical Literalism and Social Perfectionism in Alexander Campbell’s ‘Millennial Harbinger’ (1830-1864),” 331; Boring, Disciples and the Bible, 79. The phrase “amelioration of society” is taken from Campbell’s “Prospectus,” but it becomes a favourite expression of his; see Lester, “Alexander Campbell’s Milennial Program,” 38. It should also be noted that Campbell could hold in tension the divine and human work in bringing about the millennium because of his covenantal understanding of salvation history. Each new dispensation was foreshadowed by the previous one(s) and by God’s promises which he is faithful to keep, but there could also be “revolutionary discontinuity” in the transitions between dispensations. Thus, it was coherent in Campbell’s view that the church was working toward bringing the millennial age, while its initiation would also be a radical and apocalyptic act of God which initiated his promised new dispensation. See ibid., 36.}

\textbf{Nevin: Divine History and the Interimistic Church}

For Nevin, the connection between millennialism and ecclesiology was also essential, though in a much different way than with Hodge and Campbell. Despite their differences, Nevin, like Campbell, chose to initiate his second editorial effort with a bang by plunging head-first into a related topic.\footnote{Nevin had, for a short time in the 30s, been the editor of a fledgling abolitionist paper based out of Philadelphia called The Friend. After drawing the ire of many of the prominent anti-abolitionists in Philadelphia for his support of Lane Theological Seminary in Cincinnati and being threatened with a “cowhiding” for his criticism of the theatre, Nevin resigned abruptly in 1835. See D. G. Hart, John Williamson Nevin: High Church Calvinist (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2005), 55–56.} The first article in The Mercersburg Review was titled “The Year 1848” and it set a grand tone for the journal by interpreting the previous year in America as one with cosmic
significance. Parts of the article appear so nationally self-congratulatory, borderline jingoistic, that it seems to wholeheartedly affirm Maclear’s summary of the most enthused postmillennialist version of theology in the antebellum period: “The nation was an elect people, a new Israel, providentially prepared for a redemptive historical role, bound in covenant with God faithfully to perform his will, and summoned to lead all the nations to a millennial fulfillment.” In Nevin’s words:

We [America] will be in truth the centre of the world; and not simply its centre in an outward view, but the great beating heart we may say of humanity itself, through which shall circulate the life blood of its nations, and that shall serve as a common bond to gather the all into one vast brotherhood of interest and love.

Nevin continued with an allusion to Hegel, claiming, “It has become an established maxim in the philosophy of history that the culture of the human race moves with the course of the sun, from east to west… as this is to be revealed in the new universalized culture.” The excitement of the article was spurred on by the events of the previous three years, where America had considerably expanded its territory to include Texas by annexation (1845), Oregon Country by agreement (1846), and Mexican territory by (violently induced) cession (1848); alongside these American achievements were the revolutions of 1848 that rocked the European continent and had many looking for answers in the American experiment. Claims of a dawning “American epoch” in

359 Nevin, “The Year 1848,” The Mercersburg Review 1, no. 1 (January 1849): 10–44. This article was preceded by a “Preliminary Statement” that was actually quite lengthy, making “The Year 1848” technically the second article of the journal.
362 Ibid., 39. See Hegel, Introduction to the Philosophy of History, 90, as found in Howe, What Hath God Wrought, 305.
363 Nevin, “The Year 1848,” 22–24. Nevin calls the expansion part of the “genius of the country, especially as set in contrast with the revolutionary spirit across the Atlantic.” The 1848-49 European revolutions are sometimes known as the “People’s Spring.” Countries such as France, Denmark, Poland, Ukraine, the states of Germany and Italy, and the kingdom of Hungary all went into upheaval for almost the entire year; however, the revolutions were put down and there were little lasting political results from the uprisings.
world history could not help but resonate with the growing Polk-inspired “Manifest Destinarians.”

This nationalistic bravado could, perhaps, be swept away as an embarrassing solitary convulsion of enthusiasm, induced by motion sickness from significant seismic shifts in the geopolitical sphere. However, more than fifteen years later Nevin repeated the act in an address on the first Independence Day after Appomattox, which he labelled “The Nation’s Second Birth.” Here Nevin proudly pronounced America’s “late political struggle a world historical fact,” claiming that even the South could not deny that “This is the finger of God; while the nations of Europe look on in astonishment and exclaim, What hath God wrought!” Nevin’s analysis in both 1849 and 1865 appear to have been part of the “inflammable nationalistic tinder lying around which needed only a spark to make a flaming blaze for the Lord.” In point of fact, however, while Nevin did not shy away from using the term “millennium” in his writing generally, in these two articles he does not make a direct connection between the nation and the inauguration of the thousand-year period preceding Christ’s return. Furthermore, he rejects just

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366 Ibid. Italics in the original. The Scripture verse “What hath God wrought?” (Numbers 23:23) further adds to the exceptionalistic tenor of Nevin’s reflection, as it was almost surely an allusion to the contents of the first Morse code message delivered in America (1844): another sign of America’s growing prominence. This is also why the title of Howe’s book covering America during the era bears the verse What Hath God Wrought.

such a reading explicitly in the same journal issue as “The Year 1848,” preferring instead to append the title “interimistic” to the historical shifts being borne out in the American nation.  

So how was this apparent flag-waving reconciled within Nevin’s theology generally and his ecclesiology in particular? This reconciliation was found in his conception of nature and grace as they were stretched out over the frame of history. In an extensive review of Horace Bushnell’s Nature and The Supernatural, Nevin lays out in clear terms his own distinction between nature and grace (or supernature). The distinction, he claims, is not simply one of emanated degrees, with grace perfecting the slightly lower state of nature, but instead grace introduces into nature a real “life and power in a new and higher form.” There is something discontinuous between grace and nature: “[For] what nature might so fetch into itself by powers of its own would be no longer super-natural.” This divide, which Nevin uses to distance himself from Bushnell, precludes the notion of a “humanitarian” gospel, a form of “naturalism… dressed up in evangelical modes of speech” that could accomplish what the mystery of the incarnation introduces. At the same time, however, Nevin wants to avoid an exaggerated chasm, so there is no contradiction, “violent, or abrupt” between the two realities. They are, in fact, a “single system” within the “divine economy,” where the natural world shows itself as “the

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369 Nevin, “Natural and Supernatural.” The review of Bushnell’s book is more a launching pad for Nevin’s own constructive explications on the subject. Overall Nevin is complimentary toward Bushnell’s work, particularly in its use of antirationalistic thinking, as both were early adopters of Romanticism of the German and British kind. He diverts sharply, however, from what he sees as a generic supernaturalism prevalent in Bushnell despite the latter’s focus on Christology. Nevin stresses the same Christological emphasis, but then extends its ongoing presence into the Church, which Bushnell balks at.
370 Ibid., 186.
371 Ibid., 202.
372 Ibid., 178–79. Nevin is fully aware of his critique of what he later terms “liberal Christianity.” For an extension of his argument here, see especially Nevin, “Man’s True Destiny,” The Mercersburg Quarterly Review 5, no. 4 (1853): 492–520; also published as Nevin, Man’s True Destiny: A Baccalaureate Address, to the First Graduating Class of Franklin and Marshall College, Lancaster, Pa., August 31st, 1853 (Chambersburg, PA: Kieffer & Co., 1853). Here he calls the acknowledgement of anything beyond the natural realm in liberal Christianity “Ithuriel’s spear,” in that a profession of supernatural agency in the world turns a “bland liberal… at once into an intolerant fanatic” (512).
373 Nevin, “Natural and Supernatural,” 186.
mirror of the spiritual and heavenly.” 374 When we look at the physical world, he posits, even the “birds of the air and the flowers of the field” become “types and symbols,” illuminated by the “higher sphere” which shines upon them. 375 There is, after all, an inner “nisus” within the created order that forms an indissoluble connection between nature and grace to such a degree that, “In one view, nature itself is a divine revelation. A supernatural presence underlies it, and works through it, at every point.” 376

When Nevin transposed this nature-grace hypothesis into an historical key, he constructed a doctrine of historical development where the supernatural is progressively reified in the natural events of humankind. The entire process moved by “vast cycloids and stages” according to Nevin, where each historical form would work itself into a “knot” before it was dissolved – “with violence or without” – in order to make space for a “new and different form.” 377 The previous historical “stages” were not abandoned or forgotten, but their “interior substance” was retained and manifested anew in a higher form. 378 There was an eclectic mix of Post-Kantian Idealism (Hegel, Schelling, Schiller, and Coleridge) as well as Romanticism and Christian Platonism within his philosophy of history. Nevin’s insistence on a world history that moves “[From] age to age, upwards into new and higher forms” was first and foremost a

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374 Ibid. In his work Mystical Presence, Nevin seems to go further, claiming the natural connection is not merely figural but is the “very reflex of this mystery itself.” It is unclear whether the parabolic image of the vine and branches in the context can be expanded to nature more generically. See Nevin, The Mystical Presence, 230.


376 Ibid., 202-03. Nevin regularly uses “nisus” to describe this reality, which he also describes as a “reaching after.” It is, for him, mostly a negative construction where nature is frustrated by its natural compulsion, which is fruitless without the introduction of grace (incarnation). Dipuccio claims that the “genius” of Nevin’s philosophy (and theology?) was found in this tension or dialectic: “[To] hold distinct entities in organic union while maintaining their differences. It stands midway between dualism and pantheism, being a synthesis of these opposing systems.” See William DiPuccio, The Interior Sense of Scripture: The Sacred Hermeneutics of John W. Nevin (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1998), 62. Whether Nevin does indeed maintain this tension without collapsing into a “monism” or “panentheism” as Hodge suspects cannot be fully debated here.


378 Ibid., 30.
description of his doctrine of providence.\textsuperscript{379} There is, he conceived, a meeting of the “inward nius” of creation and the “outward providence” that cooperate in a “new form of existence.”\textsuperscript{380} In this way, Nevin interpreted America as the historical arrowhead piercing the next barrier in the historical outworking of the supernatural ideal, dragging the rest of the world to the higher sphere along with it. America, claimed Nevin in “The Year 1848,” was centrally identifiable in this providential outworking not “by standing over against the whole previous life of the world, as something false and bad,” but primarily because “the substance of its life… is not yet fixed, but in the process only of general formation.”\textsuperscript{381} Nevin’s fervor lay in the prepubescent potentiality of America, because there God’s grace, as it was actualized in history, appeared to be maturing something different in kind from the nation-states of the old world. This owed very little to any inherent superiority of America itself (arguably), but relied on the providential outworking of the divine within the created realm.

One of the results of this historical view is that Nevin never used the Puritanical trope of America as a “City on a Hill,” and instead he preferred to call it a “theatre” for the world.\textsuperscript{382} The former points to a divine election that is irrevocable, a static sectarian position above the other nations as a new Israel; the latter speaks of a working out of the proper universal spirit in service of and in participation with the entire world. If the chasm is too wide with no grace interacting in the natural sphere, America could be seen as a “City on a Hill” merely through the “optimism of modern anthropology.”\textsuperscript{383} On the other hand, if the distinction failed to be maintained at all, then

\textsuperscript{379} Nevin, Human Freedom; And, A Plea for Philosophy Two Essays (Mercersburg, PA: P.A. Rice, 1850), 33.
\textsuperscript{380} Nevin, “The Year 1848,” 14.
\textsuperscript{381} Ibid., 30–31.
\textsuperscript{382} Ibid., 31; see also pp. 26, 28, 30, 33. See Wentz, “Nevin and American Nationalism.” This image is also shared with his Mercersburg colleague Philip Schaff. See David S. Schaff, The Life of Philip Schaff in Part Autobiographical (New York: Scribner’s Sons, 1897), 201.
\textsuperscript{383} Adam S. Borneman, Church, Sacrament, and American Democracy: The Social and Political Dimensions of John Williamson Nevin’s Theology of Incarnation (Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2011), 48. Cordell
“Hegelian pantheism” could make America into a divine volksgeist. The promotion of America as the very theatre for world history was meant not to separate it from other nations, but to make it a representative nation, to raise up other nations into a higher order to the same historical synthesis America had been endowed with by God.

At the very base of this doctrine of providence, deeper even than the visible socio-political shifts, is a doctrine of the church that is the supernatural engine that drives the process unto its completion in “the glorious, all-harmonious millennium of creation.” Nevin boldly proclaims that “the main stream of history is in the Church.” This is a Church that is “in process, always guided and judged by the ideal, and never completed or fulfilled until that day when it and the ideal Church were joined together in the millennial Church Triumphant.”

Nichols calls Nevin’s particular formulation of the historical development of the church a “biological entelechy,” where the ideal church is “the power of a new supernatural creation, which has been introduced into the actual history of the world by the Incarnation of Jesus Christ; and which is destined to go on, causing ‘old things to pass away and all things to become new’ [Rev. 21:4, 5, adapted].” There is in the church, claims Nevin, “necessity of a visible
externalization in the world"⁴³¹ in order to diffuse the “grace lodged in its very constitution”⁴³² throughout the world and through time.

In sum, mingled amidst Nevin’s historical cycloid stages was an unconventional doctrine of postmillennialism.⁴³³ Bringing this back full circle to Nevin’s seemingly triumphalist articles of “The Year 1848” and “The Nation’s Second Birth,” we see that there is a clear difference in millennial thinking between him and Campbell. Nevin derided those who would “exult in our general civilization, as though it carried in it somehow the promise of the Christian millennium itself, and might be taken for the harbinger of the ‘new heavens and new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.’”⁴³⁴ Instead he is both more and less optimistic than Campbell, claiming the “new creation” of the millennium is “already at hand,” yet quickly adding that the church is not “complete” or “developed” to its “last necessary results.”⁴³⁵ This “interimistic” state of the church and the world was, for Nevin, a recognition that the divine ideal is not completely manifest in actual world history; rather, the entelechy of an organic conception of the church was driving the very ebb and flow, the progressive unveiling of the millennial kingdom to come.⁴³⁶ No amount of word and deed ministry, apart from the organic development of the ideal church, could induce the millennial reign. Nevin sums up the themes of world history, providence, millennialism, and church, succinctly writing:

The whole world in its history and natural order is under His government and control, so that all the changes and revolutions of the world are the product of a certain plan, which will be accomplished in the millennium. Whatever may be the natural meaning of human

⁴³¹ Ibid., 60.
⁴³³ DiPuccio sees Nevin’s millennialism turning to a stronger prophetic millenarianism after the First Vatican Council and the deaths of two of his sons. He claims his optimism in “Reformed Catholicism” or “Evangelical Catholicism” waned after these events. There is no evidence of even the beginnings of such a dramatic shift in Nevin’s writing on by the close of the War. See DiPuccio, The Interior Sense of Scripture, 85.
⁴³⁴ Nevin, “Natural and Supernatural,” 183.
⁴³⁶ Nevin, “True and False Protestantism,” 100.
history, the whole must be regarded as working unitedly for the end comprehended in the Church.”

Summary

At a time when Americans of all stripes were preoccupied with millennialism, the silence of the era’s greatest Protestant theologian is conspicuous. His reticence to engage the apocalyptic cogitations that his theological colleagues, the clergy, and the laity put forth, was a deliberate theological statement itself. By all accounts he would likely have fit best in the postmillennial cadre of Protestants, but to seek such designations is to miss the larger point – particularly as it pertained to his ecclesiology. Hodge’s spiritualization of the eschaton and his aversion to theologizing about such last things evidenced his desire to construct an ecclesiology that floated above the materiality of history and fallen humanity. The Church could not touch these historical things because its nature was entirely spiritual. Accordingly, it was no harbinger of the Second Advent (Campbell) and it was not affected by the divine movement of the dialectic and developmental historical progression through time (Nevin). The Church as a spiritual body was not causal, nor was it impinged upon by the vicissitudes of material history. It stood above, abstracted and detached from the messiness.

Underneath Campbell’s sometimes confusing mix of ecclesiological and political millennial thoughts was a theological current: social justice and evangelization were the Church’s primary mission. The twofold missionary nature of the Church was what both informed the more obvious first principles of Campbell’s ecclesiology: restoration and unity. The twofold missionary character of the Church was its final cause, whereas the Church’s unity and restoration are more akin to its efficient and formal causes, respectively. The Church was a harbinger of the millennium, cooperating with the reconciling grace of God in history to actively bring about the last things, which Campbell understood to be a reign of peace on earth. There

397 Nevin and Erb, Dr. Nevin’s Theology, 280.
was no escapist spiritualization, no quietist inaction, but there was also a rather idealized view of the Church’s capability in God’s economy.

Finally, Nevin lay the Church at the base of world history itself: the former drove the latter and was the more basic narrative of history. Through the fits and starts within world history, the Church – impelled from within and endowed from without – matured more and more into its divine ideal. The millennium was not to be induced by a divine-human synergy, but was entirely driven by the unfolding of the divine within history. Just so, Campbell’s twofold missional ecclesiology was disqualified, as was Hodge’s abstracted and spiritualized Church; instead, Nevin trumpeted the “interimistic” state of the current ecclesiological reality as a divine veiling and unveiling to the world. Here the Church presented its own being – progressively manifesting itself – as divorced from her members, yet not an abstract spiritualized reality, but a divine historical reality.

By examining the millennial theology of Hodge, Campbell, and Nevin, we see that despite avoiding the extremes of the premillennial fervor of the antebellum era, the ecclesiology of these evangelicals was deeply formed by this portion of their theology of the last things. In some respects, the first two sections of this 19th-century exploration have examined the first things and the last things of evangelical ecclesiology – the conventional starting place (first things) of evangelical theology as Scripture and certain aspects of the eschaton or the theology of the last things in the millennium. It is now time to turn to the mean time and explore how Campbell, Hodge, and Nevin moved within the ecclesiologies from the first things to the last things. What type of governance and polity or structural organization did each theology envision as suitable for this mean time?
Section 3

Ecclesial Hierarchy and the Bible Riots

Late on the night of May 7th, Bishop Kenrick met with other Catholic leaders to formulate a plan for deescalating the tension in the city. A “broadside” was printed with a plea for Philadelphians to “Follow peace with all men, and have that CHARITY without which no man can see God.” By the next morning, many of the signs had been removed and fashioned into paper hats worn mockingly by the Protestant crusaders. The final day of rioting in May was again marked by arson: fire destroyed two large Roman Catholic Church buildings (St. Michael’s and St. Augustine’s), the 3,000-volume theological library (largest in the city) on the grounds of St. Augustine’s, the Sisters of Charity Convent, and, again, dozens of individual houses. By the morning, however, with at least two dozen dead and a quarter of a million dollars in damage from the previous three days of mayhem, martial law was enacted and the Catholic Churches were under heavy guard, resulting in a temporary cessation of violence and destruction throughout the city. The sad irony was unmistakable, as the Pennsylvanian lampooned:


399 John B. Perry and Henry Jordan, A Full Account of the Late Awful Riots in Philadelphia (New York: Nafis & Cornish, 1844). St. Michael’s also housed a seminary that was destroyed (32). St. Augustine’s parish marked the beginning of the Augustinian Order in America and traced its history to the 18th century, when luminaries such as George Washington helped with its construction. The description of the materials consumed and the intentionality of the arsonists were captured in a history of the parish: “In the parochial residence there was a large, valuable library, which had been collected by the individual efforts of many of the clergy that had studied in Catholic countries, and from time to time a splendid collection of pictures and paintings... had been gathered. All were destroyed. Costly, venerable tomes were there, whose places could not be filled. Series of theologies, volumes of patristical and philosophical worth, histories valuable for the age and matter, all were heaped together and made a bonfire of. In the dark night, after the fire had destroyed the church, the howling mob of fanatics diverted themselves with the burning of these invaluable books. Some kind hands saved a few volumes, but the house that Doctor Hurley had converted into a hospital when the dread pestilence of the cholera had swept over Philadelphia of 1832 was devoted to the flames.” Francis X. McGowen, ed., Historical Sketch of St. Augustine’s Church (Philadelphia, PA: The Augustinian Fathers, 1896), 80.

400 Oxx, The Nativist Movement in America, 71. Martial law lasted, effectively, for nearly a week. Feldberg, The Philadelphia Riots of 1844, 115. The gathering of the militia on the morning of the 9th at Third and Dock Street was captured by a photograph (daguerreotype) which became the very first “news” photograph in the city of Philadelphia. W & F Langenheim, North-East Corner of Third & Dock Street, Girard Bank, at the Time the Latter Was Occupied by the Military during the Riots, Photograph, May 9, 1844, from the Library Company of
“Religious toleration enforced by loaded muskets, drawn sabers, and at the cannon’s mouth –
charity secured through dread of ‘grape and canister.’”

The mockery of Bishop Kenrick’s public plea and the destruction of prominent Catholic
institutional structures were part of a fundamental attack on the symbols of authority within the
Catholic Church. As has been explored in the introduction of the previous two sections, the Bible
Riots did not simply appear without substantial build-up. Something as small as whether a Bible
had “notes” roused the suspicions and religious indignation of a remarkable subset of the
Protestant (and Catholic for that matter) population. Something as ethereal as the future
millennium was at work undergirding and informing the social and political assumptions of an
incipient cultural pluralism that was straining to find its boundaries. On some level, it was
concerns over authority that informed both these accelerants and that eventually helped fan the
(actual and figural) flames of religious violence. By exploring the Protestant repugnance toward
the authority of the Roman Catholic Church during the Bible Riots, this intro will show how
these issues became inexorably linked to the incendiary violence. This, in turn, will help inform
and contextualize the (at points arcane and tedious) examination of Campbell’s, Hodge’s, and
Nevin’s theology of ecclesial organization and structural authority.

In an early article of the first volume of the Protestant Quarterly Review, Walter Colton
responded to Bishop Kenrick’s letter to the School Board Controllers in an extended essay.

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401 As found in https://exhibits.library.villanova.edu/chaos-in-the-streets-the-philadelphia-riots-of-1844/churches/ (accessed November 30, 2016). “Grape and canister” refers to two scattershot types of ammunition used in a canon. These anti-personnel artilleries were often used for crowd control in riots. In a review of the Riots, one journal noted how the violence was a “burlesque upon the name” of the City of Brotherly Love and how it had gained the “unenviable distinction of late years, as the theatre of popular tumults.” In fact, notes the journal, despite Philadelphia being the most “conspicuous” city in the nation “for scenes of disorder and outrage,” the Bible Riots are the most grievous example, with “Philadelphia… [now having] outdone herself in scenes of popular violence.” See W.L. Kingsley, ed., “Philadelphia Riots,” New Englander and Yale Review 2, no. 7 (July 1844): 470. Another account concluded: “Ah! Philadelphia, the city of Brotherly Love, had become in ’44 the vestibule of infernal hate.” McGowen, Historical Sketch of St. Augustine’s Church, 72.
Reverend Colton’s first complaint in the article was not the audacity of the request to sanction the Douay-Rheims version. Instead, Colton took issue with Kenrick signing the letter “Francis Patrick, Bp. Philad.”

The title *Bishop of Philadelphia*, claimed Colton, was more than a claim to be the bishop of the “Roman Catholic Church, in Philadelphia, but of all the Protestant churches too.” “This,” he concluded, “is an illustration of the arrogant pretensions of that foreign ecclesiastical power under which Bishop Kenrick holds his commission.”

Colton’s objection was, in fact, a conflation of two common anti-Catholic complaints in the antebellum period: the “foreign” reach of the Pope’s authority through a bishop’s oath and the perception that American Catholic prelates were overstepping their (purely spiritual and ecclesial) bounds. Both complaints had to do with America being a fledgling liberal democratic state, with the Catholic Church’s structures acting as a kind of litmus test for religious and political freedom. The conclusion of many Americans was articulated by Campbell in his brief response to news of the May riots when he wrote, “Many Romanists, I admit, abhor and reprobate it; still it is the spirit of the system, and essential to St. Gregory’s religion.”

That is, despite the appalling reality that homes were burned and individual Catholics were beaten and shot, at the

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402 The *Protestant Quarterly Review* was the organ of the American Protestant Association. The APA not only garnered praise from Campbell, as noted in the previous section, but had several other founding members that impacted the life of Hodge and Nevin. The most significant was Nevin’s ongoing sparring partner, Joseph Berg, who helped prepare the APA’s founding document: *Address of the Board of Managers of the American Protestant Association* (Philadelphia: James C. Haswell, 1843). Also found in the cohort of members was Ashbel Green, Hodge’s former pastor and mentor, though the two drifted apart (relationally and theologically) later in life, and Henry Boardman, a prominent former student of Hodge’s who was a decades-long board member of the Seminary and a close personal friend of Hodge. In fact, Boardman named one of his sons Charles Hodge Boardman because of how close the two were. See Gutjahr, *Charles Hodge, Guardian of American Orthodoxy*.


404 Ibid., 10.

405 Ibid.


407 Alexander Campbell, “Philadelphia Riots,” *The Millennial Harbinger*, 3, 1, no. 9 (1844): 410. In fact, commenting on the Campbell-Purcell debate where Campbell made a similar argument about the Roman Catholic “system” on a larger scale, Shea notes, “If one wants to check the pulse of the [antebellum] evangelical-Catholic relationship, this is the place to do it.” Shea, *The Lion and the Lamb*, 111.
root of the conflict was a deep suspicion of the Roman Catholic “system” in its hierarchical ordering.\(^{408}\)

Picking up on this evangelical suspicion of the “system,” we note that there were earlier antebellum events that all acted as flashpoints pointing to the impending bonfire of 1844: the American Catholic bishops’ condemnation of the trustee movement (in concert with the Pope); Gregory XVI’s encyclical *Mirari Vos* (1832); or perhaps even the fact that since 1807 the number of Catholic bishops in America had grown from one (Baltimore) to more than twenty.\(^{409}\)

The distrust and dislike for a religious system that was structured and organized in such a way that it appeared to impinge upon that great American watchword “liberty” was unmatched; it was the greatest of anti-American and anti-evangelical sins. Yet, if so many evangelical Protestants agreed that the hierarchical and authoritarian structure of the Roman Catholic Church was inimical to both the political landscape of America and the *true* Church, then what were the roadblocks that inhibited them from uniting together? If the organizational structure of the Catholic Church was so antithetical to the true Church and the liberal democratic state, why could the evangelicals not find one platform among themselves on which they could build a

\(^{408}\) Shea concludes, “The inference might easily have been made that Catholicism was a sworn enemy to democratic institutions and thus a dangerous influence in the United States.” Shea, *The Lion and the Lamb*, 57. There was, however, also a noticeable countermovement in the antebellum era of Protestants becoming Catholics, with more than 60,000 converting between 1831 and 1860: Jon Gjerde, *Catholicism and the Shaping of Nineteenth-Century America* (Cambridge: CUP, 2011), 16.

shared polity? Clearly a mutual distrust of the Catholic Church did not lead to a shared constructive ecclesiology, so why was there increased fragmentation among evangelicals during this period rather than increased unity? One reason was the acrimonious disputes over the organization and structure of ecclesial polity and the foundations for those viewpoints.

The Structure & Authority of the Church: Offices, Ordinances, and Organization

“The decade of 1850–60,” noted Sydney Mead,

America had become the repository of offshoots of almost all the religious groups of mother Europe, had added a few of her own, and all were luxuriating under the warm and vivifying sun of religious freedom and stimulated by the fertile opportunities for life and expansion offered by practically unlimited social and geographical space.410

Although Mead was not intending to be evaluative in his portrayed landscape of the evangelical state of the “Christian Ministry,” the previous quote sounds largely sanguine in its description of the fecundity of ecclesial communities during the antebellum period. Stepping into the historical context, however, we can see a different scene filled with acrimonious denominational divorces alongside hard-fought but imperfect unions.411 This section, focusing on the structure and authority of the church espoused by Campbell, Hodge, and Nevin, is located here as the final section of the first chapter because it powerfully encapsulates the contextual nature of how evangelical theology was shaped through the polemical and volatile interwar period – a volatility that was no more acute than within the Bible Riots of 1844. In many respects, this section presents the visible fruit of how antebellum evangelicals read the Bible (section 1) and viewed world history (section 2), which led to rancorous debates about what the Church should look like in practice and where her authority lay.

411 For a classic and insightful survey, see C. C. Goen, Broken Churches, Broken Nation: Denominational Schisms and the Coming of the American Civil War (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1985).
A section like this is particularly pertinent to a work covering these three theologians because of their sustained engagement in the affairs and details of their various churches. Campbell was, after all, a churchman first and a theologian second (or perhaps even third or fourth), with his writing always driven by the practical concerns of his ecclesial movement. Hodge too, though an established theologian, was never aloof from the ongoing workings of American Presbyterian proceedings and took effort to never divorce his academic work from his church involvement. This is perhaps best exemplified by Hodge’s effort to report yearly on the General Assembly in the *BRPR*, adjudicating both the theological pronouncements as well as the ever-present polity issues. Nevin, though the most theologically abstract of the three, was never unconcerned with the implications of his theology; and his last, great work was the collaborative effort he chaired in producing a new liturgy for his adopted German Reformed denominational home. The philosophical theology Nevin promoted had practical payoff in the life of the worshipping community. Structure, authority, and worship (liturgy and sacraments) were, in many respects, the culmination of more abstract antebellum ecclesiological reflection.

This section does not present an equally parsed-out exploration of each of the three thinkers. Campbell’s section is far longer (especially than Hodge’s); and there are reasons for that. First, Campbell had much more to say on these topics than either Hodge or Nevin. Second, Campbell and Hodge shared numerous assumptions; and so, to avoid redundancy, those shared assumptions are summarized at the beginning of Hodge’s subsection. Campbell’s section works overtime by illuminating much of Hodge’s thinking too. Next, the only discussion of Campbell’s sacramentology is largely buried in the footnotes. Again, this is not because it is unimportant, but

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412 Hodge’s laborious work on his 700-page *The Constitutional History of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America* is no small token of that commitment. For a helpful introduction to the work and the prominent place it holds in antebellum denominational governance as well as Presbyterian identity, see David W. Hall and Joseph H. Hall, eds., *Paradigms in Polity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994), 365.
because Campbell’s theology of the sacraments (ordinances) played far less of a role in his broader ecclesiology than his employment of them. The prominent place the ordinances had in his ecclesial practice – which is briefly discussed below – was more crucial to include than his (debated) theological understanding of them. Finally, the weight of the rest of the material has dictated the content of this section. I have tried to emphasize what each thinker emphasized, which has meant that this section is less a direct comparison of each thinker on shared categories and is more organically constructed (to borrow a Nevinian word).

Campbell

There was no topic that even came close to occupying the pen of Alexander Campbell after 1830 more than the structure and authority of the Church.\textsuperscript{413} By the launch of The Millennial Harbinger Campbell’s extreme iconoclasm, which had been spilled in black and white on the pages of his Christian Baptist journal, abated slightly, and he was faced with organizational issues more constructive in nature.\textsuperscript{414} With a rapidly growing movement – especially on the fluid and flexible frontier – the pressing concerns of the converts were practical in nature: how should churches be organized, arranged, related; who or where was the authority;

\textsuperscript{413} Lindley notes, “No more difficult problem confronted Campbell than that of the structural relation of the local congregation to the world church. A large measure of his attention throughout a period of forty years was demanded by difficulties attending this task [\textemdash] No phase of his teaching has been more variously interpreted than his teaching on this point, and his Christian statesmanship has been nowhere more greatly praised or blamed”: Lindley, Apostle of Freedom, 180.

\textsuperscript{414} Between 1830 and 1860 Campbell’s following increased approximately between six- and ninefold according to Verkruyse: Peter A. Verkruyse, Prophet, Pastor, and Patriarch: The Rhetorical Leadership of Alexander Campbell (Tuscaloosa, AL: University Alabama Press, 2005), 128. Verkruyse is not entirely clear, but seems to indicate that the 25-45,000 member estimate he gives for 1830 accounts for both the Disciples and the Stonite Christians at the time of the union of the groups. This is deduced from the fact that he cites Hughes’ estimate of 15-20,000 Stonite Christians prior to the unification efforts: Richard T. Hughes, Reviving the Ancient Faith: The Story of Churches of Christ in America (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 113. Tristano gives a more conservative estimate of a sixfold increase from the unification in 1832 to the early 1860s: Richard Tristano, The Origins of the Restoration Movement: An Intellectual History (Atlanta, GA: Glenmary Research Center, 1988), 92. His numbers are partly borrowed from Winfred Ernest Garrison and A. T. De Groot, The Disciples of Christ: A History (St. Louis, MO: Bethany Press, 1958), 325. Milner in his review of world religions in 1860 lists the Disciples as having around 600,000 adherents globally: Vincent L. Milner, Religious Denominations of the World with Sketches of the Founders of the Various Religious Sects (Philadelphia: J.W. Bradley, 1860), 146. By the start of the Civil War, the Stone-Campbell Movement was one of the ten largest denominations in America, emerging from nonexistence less than a half-century earlier: D. Newell Williams, Douglas A. Foster, and Paul M. Blowers, eds., The Stone-Campbell Movement: A Global History (Nashville, Tennesse: Disciples Historical Society, 2013), 29.
how were they like or unlike other denominations; and so forth. Campbell understood the importance of such questions, and with his new journal he moved from primarily decrying Papalism and Protestantism (though there remained a healthy share of iconoclasm) to offering tangible and theological proposals aimed at sculpting the polity of the expanding movement he helped initiate.\footnote{The number of articles spent addressing issues of polity, organization, and governance is overwhelming. The longest series was titled “The Nature of the Christian Organization,” which began in 1841 and did not conclude until 1843 with sixteen entries in that span. In the late 40s and early 50s he also had two extended series of essays with the same title, “Church Organization.” The most explicit article printed in the \textit{MH} on Church structure and authority was a reprint of the resolutions of an \textit{ad hoc} conference between churches in Virginia and Ohio, in which Campbell writes an introduction. Campbell, however, is typically evasive in his commitment to the resolutions, writing, “While I may accord with the most of them… I would not bind them upon myself,” thus leaving it unclear what he agreed with: Alexander Campbell, “Church Organization,” \textit{The Millennial Harbinger}, 3, 2 (1845): 59–67. The \textit{Global History} of the Stone-Campbell Movement notes that Campbell wrote “no fewer than twenty-nine articles on church organization and church cooperation” between 1842 and 1849 alone: Williams, Foster, and Blowers, \textit{The Stone-Campbell Movement}, 32. I agree with Richardson’s periodization of a shift in Campbell toward “constructive churchmanship” (a title he quotes, but goes unattributed). But the common anachronism that marks it as a sect-to-denomination transition is unhelpful. Richardson, “Alexander Campbell as an Advocate of Christian Union,” 120n34. Here he uses West and Lunger as examples of this historiographical framework: Lunger, \textit{The Political Ethics of Alexander Campbell}, 18, 265; Robert Frederick West, \textit{Alexander Campbell and Natural Religion} (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1948), 164.} Campbell was aware of the need to evolve the movement’s constructive and collaborative efforts, writing:

As a religious community, we have been in a transition state, and are yet only partially organized. We have no co-operative system perfected. We have grown and spread with unprecedented activity, energy and success. But a period has arrived when individual enterprise must yield to public concert and organized effort. We shall have to meet the exigencies of the church, the times and the seasons, with deliberation, watchfulness, and well concerted action.\footnote{Campbell, “Periodical Conventions,” \textit{The Millennial Harbinger}, IV, III (1853): 109.}

The concern of this section is not to compile and synthesize every detail of Campbell’s ecclesial polity, but rather to unpack the theological rationale for the moves that Campbell made in order to draw out an ecclesiological framework from Campbell’s particular context.

\textbf{Organization}

To refer to Campbell’s structure and authority of the Church, as some have, as “written code restoration” is not only inexact but actually misconstrues something more fundamental in
Campbell’s overall motivation. As Richardson notes, ultimately the moniker paints Campbell as a restorer who obsessed solely over the details and form of Biblical ecclesial polity. Instead, Richardson suggests, “Campbell’s preferred model of restoration was that of a reformer, akin to the Old Testament prophets, calling Israel back to the covenant as the true basis of her national life.” In fact, Campbell saw within his own reforming efforts “elements” of Presbyterian, Episcopal, and Congregational (or Independent) emphases and method. He viewed himself as a moderate paving a middle way, aimed at avoiding the “two extremes” of church government that he labelled “absolute tyranny and fierce democracy.” He was certain that the three great schisms of Protestantism – as he called Presbyterianism, Episcopalianism, and

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417 This is in agreement with Richardson: Richardson, “Alexander Campbell as an Advocate of Christian Union,” 115. The term was coined by Beazeley: George G. Beazley, “Accusation, Debate and Dialogue and the Future of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ),” Mid-Stream 3, no. 4 (June 1964): 196. Although Beazeley is not directly using his title in reference to Alexander Campbell, it is strongly implied within the article. He goes on, however, to argue that were Campbell alive today (~1960s), he would surely abandon this model for a “Spirit Restorationism” that Beazeley and other Disciples argued for during the process of Restructure within the 20th-century history of the movement. Richardson also lists a half-dozen other scholars who wrote between him and Beazeley (1960-1990) who held a compatible position: 124n94. Other examples of this interpretation of Campbell include Stevenson, who concludes that Campbell’s “New Testament pattern for church organization was essentially static, and was meant to remain so for all subsequent time.” Dwight E. Stevenson, “Concepts of the New Testament Church,” in The Revival of the Churches (Renewal of the Church: The Panel of Scholars Reports), ed. Wm. Barnett Blakemore, vol. 3 (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1963), 38–39. They also include scholars outside the Stone-Campbell tradition, such as Bozeman: “In traditional Puritanism the primitive norm shared pride of place with other major commitments, but in the thought of Alexander Campbell it was the unchallenged center.” T. Dwight Bozeman, “Alexander Campbell: Child of the Puritans?” in Lectures in Honor of the Alexander Bicentennial, 1788-1988 (Nashville, TN: Disciples of Christ Historical Society, 1988), 15.

418 Ibid., 116. This idea is challenging to prove from Campbell himself as he used “reform” both for his own movement and also for those Protestants who he felt had retained too much Roman Catholic practice. Hence, he could juxtapose “restore” and “reform” in order to show their vast difference, while at other times he used both interchangeably for his own movement’s efforts. For instance, on a single page in a letter to Mr. J. Wallis in England, Campbell dismisses “reformation” saying, “To reform it is impossible, only by restoring it to the church in its original form and meaning; or, what is the same thing, otherwise expressed, by purifying it from the alloy of all human opinions and traditions, and by reinstating the Bible as it stood when John the Apostle wrote the last Amen.” Campbell then describes his own efforts positively as an attempt to “reform a reformation.” Campbell, “Letters to England,” The Millennial Harbinger, New Series, I (1837): 320–21.

420 Campbell, “Church Organization - II,” The Millennial Harbinger, IV, III (1853): 184. To define Campbell largely by the statement “I have endeavored to read the Scriptures as though no one had read them before me,” as both Noll and Hatch have confined Campbell to saying in several of their works, is a gross simplification of Campbell’s thought. See, for instance, Noll, America’s God, 380; Noll, The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994), 98; Hatch, The Democratization of American Christianity, 179; Hatch, “Sola Scriptura and Novus Ordo Seclorum,” 72. Cf. Holifield, Theology in America, 295–305.
Congregationalism – were inadequate in themselves.\textsuperscript{421} Frustrated by the “paroxysm of discord” that Protestants had stirred up among themselves due to their ecclesial-political differences, Campbell began with a focus not on structure and authority per se, but on re-centering Christianity on its evangelical purposes of unity (or organized community) and truth (simple confession of Christ).\textsuperscript{422}

Still, to avoid Campbell’s copious amount of material on “Church Organization” would be a severe mistake. “Disorganization and death are, in all the realms of life, inseparable.”\textsuperscript{423} With that announcement and many alike, Campbell put both friend and foe on notice that his burgeoning religious community was not the ecclesial counterpart of political anarchy, but as the 19\textsuperscript{th}-century reformer put it, a \textit{via media} exhibited by “Liberty without licentiousness, and government without tyranny.”\textsuperscript{424} Before delving into the particulars of Campbell’s organizational propositions, we must understand that he not only saw the practical need for organization generally speaking but also recognized an inherent correlation between the orderliness of the universe, as created by God, and the need for organization within the Church.\textsuperscript{425} According to Campbell, the divine precedent extended into the created realm, validating his organizational

\textsuperscript{421} Campbell, “The Nature of the Christian Organization - IV,” \textit{The Millennial Harbinger}, New Series, VI (1842): 184. He also insisted they were not wholly wrong and could even remark, “I am a Baptist, a Presbyterian, an Episcopalian, a Congregationalist, a Methodist, a Catholic, in the proper unappropriated sense of these words. But not one of them, nor all of them, express my views, my profession, or my practice as a disciple of Christ” (see Richardson, “Alexander Campbell as an Advocate of Christian Union,” 101).


\textsuperscript{424} Campbell, \textit{The Christian System}, 85.

\textsuperscript{425} For an example of the correlation between the orderliness of the universe and the Church: “The universe, as well as the whole Bible, attests that order, system and energy, are necessary to success in every scheme which has the glory of God or the happiness of men for its object. And such, most assuredly, is the Christian scheme”: Campbell, “The Christian Ministry and Its Support,” \textit{The Millennial Harbinger}, III, VII (1850): 485. The clearest and most extended example of this correlation in Campbell’s thought is the structure of \textit{The Christian System} as it begins with an account of the order of the universe and develops the Christian system in a corresponding manner.
mandate that insisted it was “of necessity that [churches] cooperate” because cooperation was “a part of the economy of heaven.”\footnote{Campbell, The Christian System, 78. This is not to claim, however, that organization was treated as a standalone good in itself, without also being instrumental in Campbell’s vision for the Church. One of the most pronounced accounts of Campbell’s desire for organization within his reformative efforts came via an 1830 event which he recounted almost two decades later (1849) in his journal (he actually lists the original date as 1828, but seems to remember incorrectly). Campbell, “Church Organization - IV,” The Millennial Harbinger, III, VI (1849): 272. Campbell was invited to the Baptist Association’s (Mahoning) annual meeting with co-labourer in the restoration movement Walter Scott. The Mahoning Association was heavily influenced by Campbell’s thinking – particularly filtered through Scott’s preaching – and in a burst of zeal, in order to “sink into union with the body of Christ at large” as Thomas Campbell’s Declaration and Address put it, the delegates voted to dissolve the Mahoning Association. Campbell recounted, “I confess I was alarmed at the impassioned and hasty manner in which the association was, in a few minutes, dissolved.” Though Campbell tried to intervene, he was stopped by Scott who confided in the Brooke County reformer that the men had already made their decision and no interjection would be convincing. Campbell, clearly still bothered by the result after twenty years, concluded, “The Regular Baptist Mahoning Association died of a moral apoplexy, in less than a quarter of an hour. Reformation and annihilation are not with me now, as formerly, convertible or identical terms.” For a more fulsome account of how things went, see Eva Jean Wrather, Alexander Campbell: Adventurer in Freedom; a Literary Biography Vol. 3, ed. D. Duane Cummins (Fort Worth, TX: TCU Press, 2009), 18–19; Eva Jean Wrather, Creative Freedom in Action: Alexander Campbell on the Structure of the Church (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1968), 9–10. In her earlier work she provided more detail, noting that after the dissolution of the Association, Campbell did speak, saying, “[Brethren, what now are you going to do! Are you never going to meet again?]” (10). Wrather claims that one minister present later reflected on Campbell’s question, claiming, “[I]t fell upon us like a clap of thunder” (10). This author agrees with Wrather that the event provides a historical marker of a major shift in Baptist Disciples (as they were often known at the time) from “the associational principle to radical independency,” which Campbell would spend the rest of his life trying to undo. Wrather’s conclusion is apt: “At a critical moment of history [the dissolution of the Mahoning Baptist], the Campbellian emphasis on liberty under authority had been met head-on by the rampant individualism of the American frontier. And the frontier spirit had won, hands down” (9).} More importantly for Campbell, however, “organization – the setting in order of the things wanting” was the most efficient and reasonable way to make progress toward the goal of “[perfecting] the church and [converting] the world.”\footnote{Campbell, “Church Organization - I,” The Millennial Harbinger, III, VI (1849): 92.} So while orderliness was woven into the fabric of creation, the driving impulse of Campbell’s organizational plea was powered primarily by an evangelical endgame: organization would lead to the unity of the church and the conversion of humanity.

**The Aggregate Church**

In his book Apostle of Freedom, Lindley describes Campbell’s general philosophy of ecclesial cooperation as “independent-interdependence.”\footnote{428 Lindley, Apostle of Freedom, 152. The title of the book is slightly ironic because Campbell is consistent throughout his ministry that the offices of Apostle and Prophet were conferred for a specific time and role and are no longer in operation.} The title comes in response to
Campbell’s repeated description of the church as a “community of communities.” The key to both descriptors is the tension between the local and the universal church. The primary instantiation of the Church, according to Campbell, was the local body of gathered believers; however, the authority afforded to each local congregation in the way of liberty from external denominational structures was in no way license for the unfettered agency of a local church. In this way, though the local church was not to be burdened by hierarchical oversight, Campbell was equally as adamant that there was a strict biblical mandate for mutual submission and cooperation among congregations. “The independence of any community in Christ’s Kingdom” claimed Campbell, is not an independence of every other community in that kingdom… If the Christian Church or community be a church of Christians, or a community of communities, then, indeed, not one church can be absolutely independent of every other church belonging to the community or church of Christ.

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429 See for example Campbell, The Christian System, 75. While I prefer “community of communities” as an appropriate designator of Campbell’s catholic understanding of the global church, it is more ambiguous and could potentially be confused with the usage of “community of communities” in the recent Roman Catholic literature, where it describes a single parish. See Evangelii Gaudium 1.2 §28. The phrase “community of communities” arises for Campbell because he sees “the church” as used in the New Testament designating three manifestations: the local congregation or gathering (ie. the church of Philippi), the provincial or territorial group of churches (ie. the churches of Asia Minor), and the universal or catholic church encompassing all local communities of all kinds. Therefore, “the church” in its global/universal/catholic sense is for Campbell nothing more or less than the collection of all the equally formed local churches, not a “community representative of communities” (Christian System, 75), as he took the Roman Catholic and Episcopal hierarchies to be.

430 Both Campbell and Hodge leaned on the etymology of ecclesia as the “called out ones,” often using it as justification for the church as no more than the gathered community in one specific place. The heavy emphasis on the local congregation was shared by both Hodge and Campbell, although there were some significant differences in how this played out in their overall organizational schemes.

431 The recent Global History of the Stone-Campbell Movement reaffirms this general claim of Campbell’s priorities, concluding: “As long as a plan preserved the independence of the individual congregation and provided for cooperation through covenant relationships, it was within the bounds of apostolic authority”: Williams, Foster, and Blowers, The Stone-Campbell Movement, 32. The key here is to note that this mutual submission was for a purpose, not an authority which the synodical “community of communities” held over each church. There was interdependence for mission, not because the intermediate instantiation of the Church held authority on its own. This, arguably, is different from Hodge’s view that the local church was “subject” to the presbytery. Hodge’s concern was more fundamentally about order (biblically founded) and not about the negotiation of cooperation for evangelical mission. The difficulty in attempting to make too much of this distinction is that both authors shy away from writing about this middle instantiation of the Church. There is, however, clearly a difference.

Hence, Lindley’s designation of “independent-interdependence” is fitting for Campbell’s dual prescription of local authority without absolute autonomy. The corporate or “aggregate nature” of the Church, as Campbell called it, was endemic to its essence; and “the fragmentation spawned by… radical independency,” as Wrather editorialized Campbell’s words, was to have no place in Disciples ecclesiology. Just as individual believers were not Christians until they submitted to the “intercommunion” of the body of Christ, so too were churches not part of the Church until they submitted to a cooperative mandate. “There must, then,” concluded Campbell, be some great mistake lurking in the minds of those who imagine that Christ’s kingdom is a collection of ten thousand particular communities, each one being wholly absolved from any respect, co-operation, inspection, or subordination in reference to any work or purpose necessary to the carrying out and perfecting that grand system of sanctification and conversion which began in Judea under the rich effusion of the Holy Spirit.

“But” as Campbell noted, “co-operation itself is one thing, and the manner of co-operation another.” It is the question which has resulted in so much dissension among Campbell’s progeny: What was Campbell’s corporate vision for the Church? From the mid-to-late 1830s

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433 Campbell was also known to talk about the “two diocesses [sic]” which were the entire world and the local congregation: Campbell, “Letter to James H. Otey, Bishop of Tennessee - IV,” The Millennial Harbinger VI (1835): 260.

434 Campbell, “Church Organization - III,” The Millennial Harbinger, III, VI (1849): 270; Wrather, Creative Freedom in Action, 20–21. Wrather uses an uncited quote from Campbell, condemning this lack of catholicity, where “every congregation [is] a sort of kingdom of Christ itself and so imputes to each congregation the authority properly belonging to the whole church.” The description of an “aggregate character” of the Church is telling as Nevin would pick up on what he found to be a significant difference between “all” and “whole” when it came to the catholicity of the church. This will be discussed further in chapter 2; however, it is appropriate to mention here that Campbell appears to describe the universal nature of the church in language that correlates much closer to “all” than “whole”: Nevin, “Catholicism,” The Mercersburg Review 3 (1851): 1–26.


437 Lindley, Apostle of Freedom, 180n2. Lindley notes what he considers the four broad schools of Campbell’s heritage, aligning each with a 20th-century journal from the movement: first, the opposition to any supralocal church organization (Gospel Advocate); second, the allowance of “independent” agencies not accountable to a denominational board (Christian Standard); third, agencies of the church under the control of the convention made up of local church delegates (Christian-Evangelist); and fourth, an ecumenical approach working with interdenominational agencies (Scroll): 181n2. The diversity of the positions shows the challenge in Campbell historiography, as each claims to be the legitimate heir to Campbell’s theological heritage. The weight of evidence, however, as will be shown, falls somewhere in camps two and three, with Campbell seemingly conflicted in himself over the final three decades of his life.
forward, it is evident that Campbell held to some sort of congregational delegate-based cooperation that he variously describes as “senatorial,” “associational,” “conventional,” and even “conferential.” The fundamental point of coherence within the different titles was that they were all to be representative of the local congregations by employing members of those communities; there were no leaders of the Church who were not directly commissioned by a local church. For instance, he noted, “we co-operate as distinct independent communities, and meet together by messengers, at such times and places as the exigencies of the brotherhood and of society at large require.”

Campbell was not shy to admit that despite being ousted from the Baptist fold in America (definitively so by 1832), he still considered the “congregational or Baptist associational form of uniting and co-operating… more acceptable to [his] views than any other form of co-operation in Christendom.”

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440 Campbell, “Church Organization - III,” 1849, 271. Wrather, *Creative Freedom in Action*, 26. He admitted the usual Baptist Association needed to be “divested of those appendages, against which we remonstrated twenty-five years ago” (271). The problem was that Campbell was rarely, if ever, consistent and clear on what needed to stay and what needed to go in the Baptist form of government. Furthermore, some things stayed because they were of biblical precedence, while others were acceptable expediency. Which forms were permanent and which were pragmatic is what ended up creating so much confusion and dissension in the movement by the end of Campbell’s life. Wrather claims that the key difference between Campbell and the Baptist form was the former wanted a stronger senatorial form in order to shed the “fierce democracy… [where] mere majorities were likely at times to triumph over experience and wisdom” (26). In an 1837 letter to a Mr. Skinner in England, Campbell showed more optimism, writing, “I am pleased to observe that a better spirit is at work amongst the most evangelical Protestants in this country, and that many of the Baptists in America are in some very important points advancing towards the very ground which in our case a few years since was judged unauthorized and safe.”

The year 1832 marked both the formal consociation with Stone’s Christians in Kentucky as well as the so-called Dover decrees, which excluded Disciples from the Dover Baptist Association in Virginia. On Campbell’s own take on why and how things devolved within the “nesting” relationship of his movement and the Baptists, see Campbell, “Reformers Not Schismatics,” *The Millennial Harbinger*, New Series, I (1837): 145–51. Campbell wrote: “On the Bible, as our only rule of faith, piety, and morality, we solemnly covenanted, as the Records of the Redstone Baptist Association will show.” However, “In process of time difficulties arose, rather about human traditions and opinions, than about any thing [sic] in the Bible… No one of those dogmas or doctrines usually styled *evangelical* or *cardinal* amongst Protestants, ever was debated during our continuance in that connexion” (147). For Campbell’s relation to the Baptists after 1832 see also his three epistolary responses to Andrew Broaddus, the well-known Baptist preacher: Campbell, “Mr. A. Campbell to Mr. A. Broaddus - No. I,” *The Millennial Harbinger*, New Series, VI, no. III (1842): 110–13; Campbell, “Mr. A. Campbell to Mr. A. Broaddus - No. II,” *The Millennial Harbinger,*
The kind of organization that Campbell endorsed was, at least in his own estimation, light on details but demanding in commitment. It needed to be, according to Campbell, “an efficient Christian organization” that relied on the cooperative efforts of geographically close churches who would jointly “labor in the word and teaching, and provide for all the exigencies of times and circumstances.” Beyond that general idea, however, Campbell recoiled at articulating detailed aspects of how this concerted effort was to be shaped or arranged. His only prescription was that the relationship be mutually submissive in a covenant form. Even by the early 1850s, Campbell admitted that despite the amount of time and effort he had spent trying to articulate and universalize his co-operative vision for his nascent movement, in truth, the details of the topics were a “narrow niche” in Christian Scripture that were “interesting,” but not of ultimate importance.

**Precedence vs Expediency**

Where then did the source of authority for the organization of the church arise? In one of his extended series on Church Organization in the *MH*, Campbell engaged feedback from several readers, but took special care to respond at length to a series of reviews by “a correspondent of high standing and respectability” who signed off simply as A C—N. The interlocutor suggested that there were but three options in currency among Protestants of the day: tradition,

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444 Campbell, “The Nature of the Christian Organization - VII,” 434. It is unfortunate that the author goes unnamed, but Campbell notes, “though not of us, [he] is to be heard with all respect, indeed, with more attention than if he were one of us, inasmuch as his views are not biased [sic] by any predilection for our peculiarities, nor are they, perhaps, at all tinctured with any special antipathy toward our tenets or ourselves. Our motto is, ‘Prove all things, and hold fast that which is good’” (434-35).
expediency (pragmatism), and strict biblical precedence. Campbell, never one to be purposefully allusive or vague, agreed with the options and responded confidently:

The Bible alone must always decide every question involving the nature, the character, or the designs of the Christian Institution. Outside of the apostolic canon there is not, as it appears to me, one solid foot of terra firma on which to raise the superstructure ecclesiastic. The foundation of Apostles and Prophets is that projected and ordained by the Lawgiver of the Universe. On this, and on this only, can we safely found the church of Jesus Christ, whether we contemplate its doctrine, its disciple, or its government.

Yet, in response to the same correspondent, he also wrote, “To rely upon the scriptures, or to enter the arena with only a Bible in our hands, would be foolish and unwise; inasmuch as it is confessed at the outset that from the Bible the whole Christian institution cannot be learned.”

The apparent contradiction in his responses painted Campbell, to some, as deliberately Janus-faced. However, while Campbell was not always clear in his distinction, there was a way in which both of these assertions fit into a coherent ecclesiological type in his own mind. The criterion for just such a distinction was as follows: those matters that fell under “faith, piety, and morality” were expressly given in the Scriptures, while the peripheral matters of the Church, as it adapted to its time and place, were matters of wisdom, prudence, and expediency.

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445 Campbell, “The Nature of the Christian Organization - VIII,” *The Millennial Harbinger*, New Series, VI (1842): 508–14. As Campbell often did, he reprinted in full the correspondence. The interlocutor strongly takes the position that all three play a role, including “Tradition.” The writer falls into the same pattern of reasoning as Nevin and many other Romanticism-influenced evangelicals who insisted upon organic development or germ theory. This correspondence is particularly interesting because it forced Campbell to engage a framework he was unaccustomed to at the time – Romanticism was much more established in the eastern regions of the country by the early 40s (and even more so in England and Germany), but less so west of the Alleghenies. The debate even predated much of Nevin’s work on the historical development of the Church that will be discussed in this section. Campbell’s clearest rejection of the reasoning comes in his response to the image of a tree that was regularly used by those promoting the “germ theory.” Campbell writes, “A tree whose trunk is divine, and whose branches are human, must, from all analogy, produce human fruit. Now if the germ of the apostolic tree is only found in the New Testament, and the branches are gathered from human traditions, must we not have a faith in it, and an affection for it of a mixed and doubtful character?” Campbell, “The Nature of the Christian Organization - IX,” *The Millennial Harbinger*, New Series, VI (1842): 550.


448 Campbell’s lack of uniformity on this distinction has left a divided legacy. Part of the difficulty is that he did not write abstractly about ecclesiology, but often engaged specific pastoral concerns, failing to use the same language consistently. His use of absolutes in quotes like the following, although clearly recognizing the distinction between “exigency” and “faith, piety, and morality,” negates any different treatment between them: “Persuaded that
Campbell rationalized this distinction, claiming that those things pertaining to faith, piety, and morality within the Church were matters of salvation; and therefore, he insisted, they were contained in full within the Bible. The “details of duties growing out of the various and numerous exigencies of the Christian church and the world” were, on the other hand, not supplied in the Bible; and therefore to seek a “positive precept” for them within Scripture “would be quite as irrational and unscriptural as to ask for an immutable wardrobe or a uniform standard of apparel for all persons and ages in the Christian church.” The exigencies of the Church were to be no more mandated than a Christian uniform for her members. “For my own part,” claimed Campbell, “I see no necessity for any positive Divine statutes in such matters.” Instead, Whatever, then, secures the independence and individual responsibility of every particular Christian community, and at the same time leaves open to covenant agreement all matters of co-operation in promoting the common cause of Christianity in the world, fully satisfies my mind as to duty and obligation.

Only the items associated with the Church in the first category of “faith, piety, and morality” could actually be collectively called the “Christian Institution,” while all other matters were “mere conveniences… [having] no spiritual charms or allurements.” They are, according to Campbell, “accidents” or “circumstantials.” Thus, even though Campbell made it quite clear “that the church should be governed by a written document alone,” his aversion to

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the bold outlines of apostolic order, precept, and example sketched in the New Testament, furnish the necessary materials for every exigency, and for the successful development of all the redeeming and sanctifying influences of the gospel institution, we are fully intent on a full comprehension of all the documents which the Holy Volume affords.” Campbell, “The Nature of the Christian Organization - IV,” 182–83, emphasis added.

Campbell uses this triumvirate of “faith, piety, and morality” often and usually for this purpose of distinguishing the essence and accidents of the Church. For one extensive and prominent example, see Campbell, “Church Organization - III,” 1849, 270.

Ibid., 269–70.

Ibid., 270.

Campbell, “The Seven Ecclesiastic Isms,” The Millennial Harbinger, IV, V (1855): 363. He is not consistent with this, however, as can be noted in the quote above where Campbell insists, “from the Bible the whole Christian institution cannot be learned.”

Campbell, The Christian System, 76. He uses the term “accidents” here in the technical sense of things not belonging to the essence of the object in question.

Ibid., 180.
“innovation”\textsuperscript{455} did not prevent him saying something contrary: “A book is not sufficient to govern the church.”\textsuperscript{456} The first statement pertained to faith, piety, and morality and was drawn directly from Scriptural warrant and example, but the second addressed the lack of Scriptural precedence for the “accidents” of the Church and therefore was left up to the wisdom of the living members of the Church.\textsuperscript{457} Admittedly, the inconsistency was a problem for those trying to imitate or replicate Campbell’s practical theology.\textsuperscript{458}

What Campbell left less ambiguous in his schema, however, was his disdain for tradition as a legitimate authority for Church organization. Establishing an authoritative place for post-apostolic practice was a non-starter.\textsuperscript{459} Writing about the authority of tradition in the theology

\textsuperscript{455} Campbell’s definition of innovation is severe, though not surprising: “I am opposed to all innovations. Innovations, with me, are not the creations of last year, last century, nor of the last millennium. Innovations are customs, usages, rites, doctrines that commenced one year after John wrote the word amen at the end of the Apocalypse.” Campbell and Rice, \textit{A Debate between Rev A. Campbell and Rev. N. L. Rice}, ed. Marcus Tullius Cicero Gould and A. Euclid Drapier (Lexington, KY: Skillman & Son, 1844), 609–10.


\textsuperscript{457} Campbell is also not entirely consistent or clear here either. He mostly describes the “accidents” and “circumstantials” of the Church as absent or without precedence in the Bible; however, at other times he seems to indicate that there are at least examples or reasonable inferences in Scripture, but the contemporary Church is not bound by those contextual practices. For instance: “In all things pertaining to public interest, not of Christian faith, piety, or morality, the church of Jesus Christ in its aggregate character, is left free and unshackled by any apostolic authority.” Campbell, “Church Organization - III,” 1849, 270.

\textsuperscript{458} Campbell fails to clear this murkiness up as he ages. In fact, one of the most muddled articles on the issue is one of his last on the topic in 1855. After agreeing at length to a program of expediency in the cooperative measures of the churches, Campbell abruptly changes tone, writing, “We have, at least, the apostolic teachings and examples, if no platform made ready to our hand. To these, then, let us look for example, and that, too, with all deference, inasmuch as their example is to us equivalent to their oracles, they are acting under a plenary inspiration. On a careful examination of their practice, we shall have no lack of relevant authority.” Then a little further in the article he becomes even more resolved in the apparent rejection, concluding, “The Christian Scriptures are adequate, in their doctrine and spirit, to every new condition and emergency of the cause. No new faith, no new precepts, no new form of doctrine, is called for.” Pressing the point yet further, Campbell dismisses an Alexander Pope maxim from the poet’s \textit{Essay on Man}, writing, “\textit{that which is best administered is best...} will justify the papacy just as far, and as approvingly, as any form of Protestantism. Nay more. For that institution is the best administered in Western Christendom” Campbell, “Organization - I,” \textit{The Millennial Harbinger}, IV, V (1855): 383, 385. The verbatim quote from Pope’s essay is, “\textit{What’er is best administer’d is best.”}

\textsuperscript{459} The proposal by “A C—N” offered a four-posted foundation for the Church of (1) positive Scriptural mandates, (2) Scriptural examples, (3) Patristic development, and (4) prudent conventional cooperation. In response, Campbell celebrated (1) and (2), agreed with (4) as long as it did not trump (1) or (2), but abhorred the idea of (3). He responded, confirming his anti-Catholicism as well, quipping, “But that remaining element, or component, deduced from any traditions, however ancient not found in the New Testament, as containing any farther [sic] development of the apostolic germs, I must still regard as of the most doubtful and dangerous tendency. The admission of such a source of evidence pioneered the way for a full development of all those elements of apostacy
and organization of the Church, Campbell concluded, “Any addition… from such sources is, alas! Unworthy of that high confidence necessary to the establishment or authentication of any form of Christian government not found clearly sketched in the Christian Scriptures.”460 This also combined with his desire for pragmatism regarding the “accidents” of the Church to form a strong presentist bias: “we ought… [always] to act under the conviction that we may be wiser today than yesterday, and that whatever is true can suffer no hazard from a candid and careful reconsideration.”461 Scripture was non-negotiable and its authority was universal in time and place for the Church; yet, for those areas comprised of “circumstantials,” relying on tradition as an appropriate source of authority was completely unacceptable because it failed to realize that humanity was progressing in understanding. It failed, in other words, the Enlightenment assumptions that had fed Campbell’s hermeneutic and his millennialism: “Weak minds are the slaves of old times, and of old customs.”462 Things were moving forward, getting better, understanding was growing, the dark ages were a thing of the past; Campbell was an optimist who saw tradition as constraints upon the progress of truth as it was being peeled back by the advancing knowledge of the age.463 In two helpful concluding quotes from Campbell, it is clear that beyond the realm of Scriptural precedence, pragmatic presentism always trumped tradition:

If then it should appear that there are no apostolic precepts, precedents, or facts from which a complete Christian organization can be gleaned, I would rather infer that whatever is wanting to complete the organization in reference to any exigencies, times, or circumstances whatever, is left to Christian wisdom and prudence, and to be regarded

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460 Ibid., 549.
462 Campbell and Rice, A Debate between Rev. A. Campbell and Rev. N. L. Rice, 608.
463 Campbell was still Calvinist enough to have a robust understanding of total depravity – or at least the depths of human sin. And although he was much more of a rationalist than a revivalist or pietist, his optimism fit closely with much of the New School Presbyterians and the activist Congregationalists. For a selection of Campbell’s writings on sin, see Alexander Campbell and Royal Humbert, A Compend of Alexander Campbell’s Theology (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1961), 216–31.
with no other veneration or authority than is due to human enactments: I say, I had rather infer this than throw myself upon such a sea of troubles as that upon which I must sail by way of Eusebius and his apostolic fathers in quest of the terra firma of apostolic installations.\(^{464}\)

Or again:

I, indeed, believe… that we have “a distinct and comprehensible idea” of the ancient order of things in the New Testament, so far as it is essential to the perfection of church organization; and whatever is wanting to the mere rearing of the tabernacle is to be supplied, not by the traditions of the Fathers – their opinions, their authority, or their feasts, but to be supplied by, and regarded as, the dictates of human prudence, varying its arrangements according to the ever-varying circumstances of society.\(^{465}\)

Speaking about the various proposals that Campbell felt relied too heavily on either pragmatic expediency or traditional development, he exhorts his readers, writing, “We must equally guard against Scylla and Charybdis, lest in our vacillating from one extreme we rush into another.”\(^{466}\)

Wrather is correct to conclude that the Church structure and organization was “subject to these twin authorities, the Word and the Divine Society” or the Bible and the living community of faith, so long as tradition was seen as a dead authority, not a part of the living Divine Society.\(^{467}\)

**Function vs Form**

All of this is not to suggest that Campbell “[undervalued] church organization nor Christian prudence, in conducting the very minutiae of Christian fellowship.”\(^{468}\) “But,” as he implored his readers,

> to make the mere polity, or etiquette of church institutions, rather than Christ himself, personally and officially contemplated, the test of Christian character, or the bond of Christian fellowship, is to lay a new foundation for Christ’s church, alike unknown to the Old Testament and to the New.\(^{469}\)

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\(^{466}\) Campbell, “Organization - I,” 385. See also Wrather, Creative Freedom in Action, 14.

\(^{467}\) Wrather, Creative Freedom in Action, 23. Campbell calls this dead tradition the “conceit of a venerable antiquity” and attributes its “encroachment” upon “evangelical reformation” to “error and immorality, sacred and popish relics.” Campbell, “Letters to England,” 269.

\(^{468}\) Campbell, “The Seven Ecclesiastic Isms,” 365.

\(^{469}\) Ibid.
Finding the proper relationship between the “organization and government of the Christian church” and “precepts and the promises of the Christian gospel” (everything to do with faith, piety, and morality), was the ongoing struggle for Campbell.\(^{470}\) “Still the question of organization and administration is not first,” he claimed, “but second both in the order of time and importance,” as the polity of the Church was always at the service of its mission.\(^ {471}\) Though Campbell would never have suggested that the function and form of the Church’s organization could be separated, his enduring legacy is as a reformer engaged in the evangelical task of calling back those Protestants whose form of Church government had stifled the intended function of Church organization.\(^ {472}\) He lamented that due to the denominational infighting (or “partyism”) amongst Protestants, the Church had “crippled… much of her converting, salutary, and redeeming power in the world.”\(^ {473}\) Going even further, he suggested that mechanical, confessional, and systematical forms of government had actually only served to “preserve a society of carnal, selfish, and sensual professors” of Christianity who missed the greater command: “Love is the fulfilling of the constitutional law of Christ’s kingdom as much of the law of Moses… The Lord Jesus never intended to have any bond of union, rule, authority, or power in his kingdom as a substitute for love.”\(^ {474}\)

Admittedly Campbell’s desire for a community of communities built simply on love and evangelism was, in practice, quite ethereal. However, as has been shown, Campbell oscillated between the highly specified and the frustratingly vague. At times he responded practically to the


\(^{471}\) Ibid.

\(^{472}\) Harrison Jr., “Nailed to the Church Door: How Protestant Was Alexander Campbell’s Reform?” 60. Harrison concludes, “The church, then, is not only One, Holy, and Catholic, it is also semper reformanda, always reforming.” Curiously he omits “Apostolic”; however, this seems unintentional as Campbell clearly sees an element of apostolicity in the Church, as will be shown below.


needs of the new communities of Disciples – using the Scriptural precedents and the collective wisdom of the contemporary community of believers – offering an organizational platform that was often rigid in detail. At other times, he stepped back and shunned the legislation of any ecclesial governmental form in favour of promoting the unifying power of the simple confession. The mission was the same, however. The independent-interdependence of the Church was marked by each community cooperating “with all its neighboring communities… to convert all nations, [furnishing] a grand model for the church of all ages, in its aggressive and proselytizing character.”

The mission of the Church, as understood as the conversion of the world through a united body of Christ as founded upon the simple confession of Christ, always informed and reformed the structure and authority ordained to carry out that goal. As Campbell put it, “Our cooperation is exclusively designed for the sake not of legislation or government, but for the sake of the temporal wants and growth of the body – for the sake of communicating to the necessity of saints, and of promulging [sic] the gospel to all the world.”

*Ministerial Office: What, then, serveth the Christian ministry?*

The final quote from Campbell in the section above comes from an extended correspondence between the Reformer and the first Episcopal Bishop of Tennessee, James Otey. The interchange provides a helpful starting point for this subsection devoted to Campbell’s view of the ministerial offices of the Church. Without our delving into the minutiae

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477 This is the question that Campbell first posed to Bishop Otey after their in-person discussion about the priesthood in 1835 (Franklin, TN). The question began a ten-month correspondence that included eight replies from Campbell. Campbell, “Letter to James H. Otey, Bishop of Tennessee - I,” *The Millennial Harbinger* VI (1835): 229.
478 The entire 8-epistle correspondence from Campbell is devoted to rebutting a tract given to the Bethany reformer by Otey during their time together in Franklin. The tract was by the then assistant Bishop of Pennsylvania, Henry Ustick Onderdonk (the older of the brother Bishops). Henry U. Onderdonk, *Episcopacy Tested by Scripture* (New York: Protestant Episcopal Tract Society, 1831). Despite his harsh critiques, he noted that the Onderdonk book is “the best defence of diocesan episcopacy which I have seen.” The reason for Campbell’s high praise was that Onderdonk sought to base his argument entirely on Scripture rather than using the early Church as an authority. Campbell, “Letter to James H. Otey, Bishop of Tennessee - VII,” *The Millennial Harbinger* VI (1835): 78.
of the debate between Campbell and Otey (and Bishop Onderdonk), three points are apposite for unpacking Campbell’s ecclesiology. First, Campbell rejected the hierarchy of the episcopacy; second, he rejected the idea of endowed divine power through succession within the ministerial office; and third, he rejected the idea of diocesan structure within the church as overseen by a solitary bishop. These were the same lines of reasoning Hodge took in his anti-episcopal writing.

There was, in Campbell’s understanding, a single order of ministry: the priesthood of all believers. All Christians, whether lay or ordained, were “but one order, though possessing great diversities of gifts.” Disciples were equal in their ministerial calling, yet distinct in exactly how that calling played out. Whether or not Campbell understood the bishops is beside the point, for the fact remained that Campbell refused to acknowledge any ontological hierarchy of ministry, advocating fiercely for a flat (or an equally raised) structure of all disciples. At the root of Campbell’s understanding of ministry were his political opinions in general – he was, 

479 In this particular set of letters, Campbell contended that there was a single order of ministry in three kinds: bishop (or elder), presbyter (or deacon), and laity. This, however, is not his consistent position as elsewhere he listed as many as four other orders found in the New Testament: Apostles, Evangelists (sometimes Missionaries), Pastors, and Teachers. A few years later Campbell would list Bishops, Deacons, and Evangelists as a part of the ordained ministry, which would become more standard for him: Campbell, *The Christian System*, 81. The more vital point here is that there is no distinction in “order” as all Christians were equally endowed as ministers of the gospel. Harrison notes, “Campbell, like Luther, said that in baptism Christians are ordained to the priesthood.” Harrison Jr., “Nailed to the Church Door: How Protestant Was Alexander Campbell’s Reform?” 54. Yet Wrather is correct to insist that for Campbell there was a sharp difference between the “priesthood of all believers” and the “priesthood of every believer.” Campbell, she maintained, rejected the latter as individualistic and unordered. Wrather, *Creative Freedom in Action*, 13.


481 Campbell did, however, advocate for both an “ordinary” and “extraordinary” order of ministry, but the latter was reserved almost exclusively for the ministry of the Apostles of the early Church. Campbell, “The Nature of the Christian Organization - XII,” *The Millennial Harbinger*, New Series, VII (1843): 134.

482 In his letters to Otey he does not spend much time unpacking what he thinks either Otey or Onderdonk’s positions actually are, but elsewhere he spells out further what his understanding of the teaching of the episcopacy is in the Episcopal Church: “Our correspondent claims for bishops a lineal descent from the Apostles, and a rank official above the priests or elders of all Christian communities. He claims for them, if I understand his views correctly, a sort of sub-apostolic office – a successorship to the original twelve, so far as ecclesiastic jurisdiction extends; and contends that the rank, or grade, or degree of official power with which they are divinely clothed, is superior to that of any mere elder or church officer of any other name.” Campbell quickly follows this by concluding: “It is just here that I am sorry to be compelled to dissent from him.” Campbell, “The Nature of the Christian Organization - X,” 37. Later he relies heavily on one of his favourite Puritans, John Owen, and his critique of the “diocesan episcopacy”: Campbell, “The Nature of the Christian Organization - XI,” *The Millennial Harbinger*, New Series, VII (1843): 80.
after all, a radical proponent of democracy.\textsuperscript{483} Campbell railed against “priestcraft” and “kingcraft” alike and sought to relocate the seat of authority from external offices to the individual and community.\textsuperscript{484}

This leads to the second criticism Campbell had of the Episcopal Bishops.\textsuperscript{485} Campbell did not suggest that ministerial leadership was without authority in the local or aggregate church, but only contended that this authority was imbued through the whole body and then invested in the individuals who laboured in the ministerial role, rather than being passed down via the nature of the office itself. “The community, the church, the multitude of the faithful” argued Campbell, “are the fountain of official power. This power descends from the body itself – not from its

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\item \textsuperscript{483} In fact, Campbell used secular political arguments to drive home his ecclesial points, assuming they were built securely on a broad natural law foundation. For instance, “These rulers [secular politicians] do not create and ordain themselves. These rulers, elected and ordained by the people, are God’s ministers; and are, by the ordination of the people, the ordinance of God. So teaches the great Apostle Paul. They are not God’s ministers until appointed by the people, and the people choose and appoint them from themselves.” Campbell, “Letter to James H. Otey, Bishop of Tennessee - VII,” 593. See also Campbell, “Senatorial Government of the Church,” 353.
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See also Lunger, \textit{The Political Ethics of Alexander Campbell}; J. Caleb Clanton, \textit{The Philosophy of Religion of Alexander Campbell} (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2013), 5–7. Campbell was a staunch Jeffersonian and perhaps even a Jacksonian (his close relationship with Henry Clay complicated this). He had argued passionately for the suffrage of all white men as an elected member of the 1829-30 Virginia Constitutional Convention in the company of and against such luminaries as James Madison, James Monroe, John Tyler, and John Marshall. He also attempted to bring up abolition, but realized it was far too progressive for the time and place. He was the only elected clergyman at the Convention and his opinions clearly were not appreciated by the southern and eastern representatives who helped pass a resolution that no further clergymen could be elected in the state. For an engaging and lengthy account of Campbell’s months in Charleston for the Convention, see Wrather, \textit{Alexander Campbell}, 2007, 301–410.

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\item \textsuperscript{484} See Harrison Jr., “Nailed to the Church Door: How Protestant Was Alexander Campbell’s Reform?” 55. It is remarkable that two of the most prolific historians of antebellum American religion both single out Campbell’s debate with Robert Owen in 1829 as a marker for the shift from external authority (in society) to an internal rationality that the Jacksonian era was becoming known for. As Noll puts it, Campbell used Baconian logic and Lockean evidences, but ultimately implored the audience (of 1200+ daily for more than a week!) to reason for themselves as to whether the morality of freethinking or rational Christianity was sounder. The implication was that the collective will of the people was the seat of authority for society: Noll, \textit{America’s God}, 242ff. The novel American-ness of the Campbell-Owen debate is underscored in Howe as he notes how the famous British writer Frances Trollope was in attendance and found the debate peculiar: Howe, \textit{What Hath God Wrought}, 446. See also Humble, \textit{Campbell and Controversy}, 78ff; Frances Milton Trollope, \textit{Domestic Manners of the Americans} (Paris: Baudry’s Foreign Library, 1832), chapter 14.
\item \textsuperscript{485} This line of reasoning was developed and expanded by Campbell in his debate with (Roman Catholic) Bishop Purcell. It was, in fact, issue #2 in Campbell’s initial volley to Purcell in his “Points at Issue” statement. Campbell and Purcell, \textit{A Debate on the Roman Catholic Religion}, vii.
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servants.”

In other words, “the idea of hereditary official grace is not found on all the pages of the New Testament”; nevertheless, “Elders or seniors, indeed, are the proper persons to ordain, by and with the consent of the church.”

The divine or pneumatic power of the ministerial offices was functional and given by the community, not endowed within a ministerial office and passed via succession: “vox populi, vox Dei,” as Campbell proudly retorted to Bishop Purcell in their debate. “The voice of the church” contended Campbell, “must be distinctly heard before any person can be acceptably heard.”

This radical idea, Campbell concluded, “lays the axe to the root of that accursed tree of ecclesiastic despotism, growing out of a self-created religious aristocracy, which has scourged Christendom with a whip of scorpions for more than a thousand years.”

Yet despite the strong accusations against the clergy, Campbell did believe in the perpetuation of the biblical ministerial offices (which he opaquely called a “self-preserving and conserving principle”) that would maintain ecclesial stability through the role of oversight.

As in his broader thoughts on organization, Campbell sought what he felt was middle ground between “too much of independence and democracy in one scheme, and too much monarchy and despotism in another scheme of ecclesiastical organization and administration.” After all, maintained Campbell, the Church was a divinely created, living organism that therefore needed

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486 Campbell, *The Christian System*, 86. It is true, nevertheless, that Campbell still held to the “Apostolic tradition” that affirmed “The whole community chooses – the seniors (elders or bishops) ordain.” Thus, the bishops (elders) still had to lay hands on the individual for the power of office to inhabit the individual filling the prescribed role. “How much surer and purer,” asserted Campbell, “is ecclesiastic authority thus derived from Christ the head, immediately through his body, than when derived through a long, doubtful, corrupt dynasty of bishops or pontiffs!”

487 Ibid., 85–86. See also Campbell, “The Nature of the Christian Organization - IV,” 184. He saw divine power within the episcopal conception as follows: Christ → Apostles → Bishops; whereas his own view was Christ → Priesthood of all believers → Ordained members of the community (including bishops or elders).


490 Campbell, “Letter to James H. Otey, Bishop of Tennessee - VII.”


492 Ibid.
proper governance in order to fulfill its calling. Here Campbell used the image of bodily “organs” for the ministerial roles, insisting that without these the whole body “could not live, much less fulfill its mission in this world.” These vital components are “essential to the growth and action” of the body as it “moves, acts, and enters upon its mission.”

The reoccurring language of mission is unmistakable in Campbell’s discussion of the ministry, and it mirrors his wider understanding of the organization of the Church. God ordained a given ecclesial structure – including both ministerial roles and ordinances (sacraments) – within Scripture in order to best embody the gospel in the world. Moving from an organic to a political image, Campbell argued that the constitution and legislation of the Church were put in place by Christ and his apostles and concretized in the New Testament, but

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493 Elsewhere he maintains the Church “began in miracle” and was then “associated, then disciplined, and finally consummated with its apostles, evangelists, pastors, teachers, and stated occasional conventions”: Campbell, “Periodical Conventions,” 109.


495 Ibid. Here Campbell is referring to the universal Church and not simply a local instantiation.


497 The idea of “embodying” the gospel in the world is vitally important for Campbell as he sought to avoid the immediacy of the spiritualized gospel in much of the surrounding revivalism. This also extends from the ministerial offices to his entire sacramental understanding. In the Christian System Campbell reminds his readers of the “embodied” nature of the gospel and the Church, writing, “Reader, be admonished how you speak of bodily acts in obedience to divine institutions…remember the sacrifice of a body on mount Calvary, and talk not lightly of bodily acts” (257). Like the ministerial offices, the ordinances or sacraments were given within the constitution of the Church and so they were non-negotiable (though Campbell sometimes lists his standard three – Baptism, Lord’s Supper, and Lord’s Day – and sometimes lists as many as nine ordinances, with Scripture and Marriage often joining the primary three by the 1860s). As Campbell puts it, “These are not matters of policy, or arrangement, or expediency; but of divine and immutable ordinance and continuance” (77). Unlike the ministerial offices, the divine power promised within them was not channeled through the community at large, but “contained the grace of God” within themselves (182). A more fulsome exploration of Campbell’s place and purpose of the ordinances within the Church would reveal a parallel message to the ministerial office and the Church’s organization in general. Newell Williams captures this connection fittingly in an excellent article touching on Campbell’s sacramentology: “For Campbell, the sole purpose of the church and its institutions… is to communicate the good news of God’s forgiveness and acceptance of sinners” (147). D. Newell Williams, “The Gospel as the Power of God to Salvation: Alexander Campbell and Experimental Religion,” in Lectures in Honor of the Alexander Bicentennial, 1788-1988 (Nashville, TN: Disciples of Christ Historical Society, 1988), 127–48. There are a few articles and chapters on Campbell’s sacramentology that directly support the connection made between the missional thrust of Campbell’s ecclesiology and the necessity of mediate sources of grace within the Church: see Richard L. Harrison Jr., “Early Disciples Sacramental Theology: Catholic, Reformed, and Free,” in Classic Themes of Disciples Theology: Rethinking the Traditional Affirmations of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), ed. Kenneth Lawrence (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1986); Gilpin, “The Doctrine of the Church in the Thought of Alexander Campbell and John W. Nevin”; William Tabbernee, “Alexander Campbell and the Apostolic Tradition,” in The Free Church and The Early Church: Bridging the Historical and Theological Divide, ed. Daniel H. Williams (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002); Richardson, “Alexander Campbell as an Advocate of Christian Union.”
the execution of this divine institution was left to the wisdom of the living community.\textsuperscript{498} Just so, Campbell could say that “The qualifications for any office are always found in the nature of the office itself. They are generally detailed [in Scripture], but not always, because the \textit{work to be done} is the best guide in ascertaining the qualifications of the doer of it.”\textsuperscript{499} There was no \textit{divine call} to be waited upon, but a “social compact” as Lindley calls it, that was guided by the “nature of the functions to be performed” and “the qualifications of those called to perform them.”\textsuperscript{500}

Finally, in his third critique, Campbell was incensed that Otey and Onderdonk could admit that when they used the term “bishop” they were referring to a successor of the Apostles.\textsuperscript{501} Campbell saw no evidence for this within the description of a bishop’s (\textit{επίσκοπος}) role in the New Testament, insisting that they were a part of a single-congregation leadership structure.\textsuperscript{502} Unlike many of his Presbyterian and Congregationalist contemporaries, Campbell was not averse to describing the Church as “episcopal in its organized character.” However, he

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\item \textsuperscript{498} Something changes in creation after humankind is made. Campbell notes that originally God’s word was the “immediate executive of his will”; however, now his word (Word?) is always mediated to the world and one of those ways is through the conduct of ministers. Campbell, “The Christian Ministry and Its Support,” 481.
\item \textsuperscript{500} Campbell is baffled by this line of reasoning when the whole book had been attempting to prove the episcopacy based on Scriptural precedents. Playing off Shakespeare, he writes, “I cannot agree with the author of ‘Episcopacy tested by Scripture,’ that ‘the name is not worth a line of controversy.’ The world is deceived by names and governed by names… If your bishops are apostles, your deacons evangelists, and your elders priests, you need not quote one passage from the New Testament… You may call the thing called rose, by a new name; you may call it \textit{dulcissima}, if you please; but should you take its appropriate name and apply it to a poppy, you would bewilder and distract, and might grossly deceive the whole community.” Alexander Campbell, “Letter to James H. Otey, Bishop of Tennessee - II,” \textit{The Millennial Harbinger} VI (1835): 242.
\item \textsuperscript{501} Campbell held firm to the belief that the Apostles had no legitimate successors. To be more precise, Campbell recognized three orders of apostleship in the New Testament: first, Christ as the apostle of God; second, the original Twelve and Paul as apostles of Christ; third, apostles of churches (“messengers” or “those sent”). Only the third could have successors and there was no ontological connection to the first two orders of apostleship: “We contend that neither Jesus as the Apostle of God, nor the Apostles of Christ, as his ambassadors to the nations, can, from the very nature of their office, have successors.” Campbell, “Letter to James H. Otey, Bishop of Tennessee - IV,” 361; Campbell, “Letter to James H. Otey, Bishop of Tennessee - II,” 244; Richardson, “Alexander Campbell as an Advocate of Christian Union,” 123n86. His argument against the succession of the Apostles was both a silence in Scripture as well as his belief that the Apostles were given a special dispensation of the Spirit in order to accomplish all roles in the early church – they were the founding utility men of the New Testament Church and no one could possibly fill that role in even one congregation today. Campbell, “Letter to James H. Otey, Bishop of Tennessee - II,” 243–44.
\end{itemize}
was quick to add that these bishops were not like England’s or Rome’s, but oversaw local congregations only, having no territorial jurisdiction.  

**Hodge**

Charles Hodge maintained more than a casual interest in polity and ministerial structure of the Church. Even in his publishing efforts, this area of interest held a prominent place; after all, his longest work before the Civil War was his *The Constitutional History of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America*, which was not simply an attempt at an objective historical account of the denomination, but a not-so-subtle case for how antebellum Presbyterians should navigate the ongoing Old School-New School division and the growing tension between the North and the South. In addition to this massive 700-page two-volume tome, published as the 30s turned to the 40s, Hodge also regularly wrote articles in the *BRPR* on issues of governance, ministry, and the sacraments of the Church. In fact, Holifield estimates almost a quarter of his ~140 articles were occupied with some degree of this theme. Despite being in a chair that taught doctrine not polity, Hall and Hall conclude, “By all judgments Hodge was one of the leaders, if not the foremost leader as a commentator on Presbyterian government and related topics in the mid-nineteenth century, one heyday of American Presbyterianism.”

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503 Campbell, “Church Organization - II,” 183.
505 Holifield goes on to say, “… no other single topic so consistently engaged Hodge throughout his career.” Holifield, “Hodge, the Seminary, and the American Theological Context,” 119, 123. Hoffecker notes that the greatest single legacy of the *BRPR* was its defense of Old School Presbyterianism in the North: Hoffecker, *Charles Hodge*, 134.
506 Hall and Hall, *Paradigms in Polity*, 365. Perhaps not surprisingly then, Hodge was voted to be the Moderator of the General Assembly in 1846.
In many ways, Hodge waged a two-front war when it came to theological issues of ecclesial governance: “ritualists” or “the church party” as Hodge called them on one side, and revivalist evangelicals (mostly New School Presbyterians and Congregationalists) on the other.

Undoubtedly both ritualist and revivalist fronts coloured his own doctrinal understanding and hue of Presbyterianism, but his closer personal relationship with “Church Party” folk, such as Nevin (German Reformed), MacIlvaine (Episcopalian), German mediating theology core members like Tholuck and Hengstenberg (neo-Lutheran) and even some of the jure divino Southern Presbyterians (Thornwell and Dabney) left the most indelible mark on his thinking.\(^{507}\)

\(^{507}\) Those who have studied Hodge have been split on who his primary interlocutors were. For some, Hodge was a high-church advocate who refused to acquiesce to the democratic revivalists of the day, while others have seen Hodge as a low-church proponent who defended against catholicizing tendencies. The most convincing scholars of the “high-church” camp are Holloway and Turner: see James Turner, “Charles Hodge in the Intellectual Weather of the Nineteenth Century,” in Charles Hodge Revisited: A Critical Appraisal of His Life and Work, ed. John W. Stewart and James H. Moorhead (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002); Holloway III, “The Princeton Ecclesiology.” Holloway’s take is particularly interesting as it’s set in a dissertation on the republican nature of the Princeton theology, where Hodge is ultimately a supporting actor to Thomas Smyth. Those prominent in the “low-church” cohort include Deifell and Holifield especially: see Deifell, “The Ecclesiology of Charles Hodge”; Holifield, “Hodge, the Seminary, and the American Theological Context”; Holifield, “Mercersburg, Princeton, and the South.” Reynolds goes to lengths to acknowledge the two-front war in which Hodge was engaged; nevertheless, he ultimately sees the Princetonian as more of a low-church advocate “who developed his ecclesiology primarily in response to the growth of catholicizing tendencies within Protestant churches” while successfully avoiding the extreme democratizing tendencies. Reynolds, “Charles Hodge’s Ecclesiastical Elenetics,” 249. Reynolds’s conclusion that “His encounter with the catholicizing proclivities in evangelical Episcopalianism, the Mercersburg theologians Philip Schaff and John W. Nevin, and James Henly Thornwell and other Old School Presbyterians… demonstrate Hodge’s mediational and inclusive ecclesiology” seems a bit too rosy (1). Bademan, though following Reynolds in many respects, including acknowledgement of the two-front defense, leans more toward Hodge as a High Church advocate, though he prefers to speak about the antebellum cohort of churchman as “catholic” Protestants. For example, he writes, “[T]hough Nevin and Hodge were on the same side of a vast chasm, a smaller but formidable valley still separated them.” Bademan, “Contesting the Evangelical Age,” 295.

Both sides certainly have ample evidence for their cause, yet Hodge’s consternation over revivalism was largely relegated to intra-Presbyterian (or Presbygational) spats, with his post at Princeton putting him largely out of reach from most of the populists of the day. Although Campbell was not a revivalist, he was a populist theologian. It is remarkable that, to my knowledge, Hodge mentions Campbell only once and it is because of the Bethany theologian’s debate with the Presbyterian N.L. Rice. Charles Hodge, “A Debate Between Rev. A. Campbell and Rev. N. L. Rice, on the Action, Subject, Design and Administrator of Christian Baptism,” Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review 16, no. 4 (1844): 581–94. Though I have sympathies with interpretations of Hodge as a sort of mediating voice, containing aspects of both high and low church interpreters being valid, there are certain conclusions that must be ruled out directly. For instance, Turner’s statement that “Hodge took so high a view of the church that other Americans may have suspected him of sympathy with Oxford” seems wildly imaginative to me.

The Same but Different

There were many ways in which Hodge and Campbell were starkly different. The former was from a respected Philadelphian shipping family, prominent within Presbyterian circles; and though Charles himself was never very well-off financially, his chair at Princeton secured his prominence and power within the intelligentsia of the day. Campbell, on the other hand, was an immigrant expelled from American Presbyterian and Baptist folds, who resided far from the intellectual centres of the fledgling nation and yet was very popular with the common folk and exceedingly wealthy despite his everyman persona. More importantly, as has been shown, Campbell and Hodge saw the future and read the Bible differently; yet despite all this, they held to remarkably similar understandings of the organization of the Church.

Hodge used his three biblical principles of ecclesiology as a different foundation than Campbell, but both advocated for the parity of the clergy where the Prophets and Apostles were

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508 Of the two modern biographies of Hodge, Gutjahr does the most thorough job of placing Hodge into familial and social contexts. With the premature death of his father, Charles’ mother was never well to do; however, once his brother Hugh established his pioneering medical practice (gynecology), the family was again in a comfortable financial place because of Hugh’s generosity. Gutjahr, Charles Hodge, Guardian of American Orthodoxy.

509 It has been said that Campbell was the wealthiest man in the newly formed state of West Virginia when he died. See Michael W. Casey and Douglas A. Foster, The Stone-Campbell Movement: An International Religious Tradition (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 2002), 92; Lunger, The Political Ethics of Alexander Campbell (St. Louis, MO: Bethany Press, 1930), 147. The still-standing “Campbell Mansion” on the campus of Bethany College attests to a certain level of opulence. Among other items is the ornate wallpaper (depicting the “Wandering of Ulysses” in the parlor) imported from France to match Andrew Jackson’s hermitage in Nashville, where Alexander was once a guest. Like Jackson, Campbell maintained his populist feel despite his gentry reality. Overnight guests at the Mansion included luminaries such as Henry Clay, Daniel Webster, John C. Calhoun, Jefferson Davies, and James Garfield (on numerous occasions). See Clanton, The Philosophy of Religion of Alexander Campbell, 6–7.

510 Campbell would have readily claimed his governance was supplied by the New Testament Church and 19th-century expediency, whereas Hodge was happy to rest on the American Presbyterian Synod’s “Adopting Act” of 1729 that officially accepted Westminster as the confession of faith (172). Hodge’s affection for Westminster is unhidden in his writing, as he called it “the birth-day of the great principles of civil and religious liberty… [the divines of which], after long deliberation, prepared and published a Confession of Faith and a Directory for Worship, Government, and Discipline” (171). Hodge went on to list two differences between American Presbyterianism and the Scottish Church: “first, that we have no body analogous to the “Commission of the General Assembly… A second source of difference consists in the close relation which exists in Scotland between the Church and state” (175). Overall, Hodge is more concerned with the second difference. Hodge, The Church and Its Polity.
seen as temporary and extraordinary – not a continuing order in the post-apostolic age. They also were in agreement that the ministerial offices were empowered by the whole people of God, or, as Hodge puts it, “That as the Spirit dwells not in the clergy only, but in the people, all power is, in sensu primo, in the people.” And even though Hodge demurred from his fellow Southern Presbyterians’ jure divino ecclesiology, preferring his general principles, he did accept with Campbell that the Bible outlined an enduring ministerial ordering of the local church. They both held to a strong anti-Erastian position of the Church, while maintaining the local, regional, and universal instantiations of the Church. And, perhaps most generally, they

511 Hodge’s own summary of his ecclesiologic foundation: “We maintain… that while there are certain general principles laid down on this subject in the word of God, Christ has left his Church at liberty, and given her the authority to carry out those principles. This we have endeavoured [sic] to prove from the absence of a command binding the Church to exact conformity to the example of the apostles; from the fact that the apostles themselves did not adopt any one unvarying plan of Church organization; and from the undeniable fact that every Church upon earth, our own among the rest, has acted upon this principle and introduced many things into her system of government for which no express scriptural warrant can be produced.” Ibid., 279–80. Campbell and Hodge disagreed on how to treat the term Bishop in the 19th-century Church. For Campbell, it was a point of importance to reclaim the term in its proper biblical sense and restore it from the abuse he assumed the Episcopal and Roman churches were doing to it, but Hodge was more pragmatic, seeing that since “Bishop and prelate [are] synonymous, we think it as hopeless a task to attempt a change now as to make the word white mean black, and black white” (243). Hodge, like Campbell, relied on Owen for a defense of his equality in office of all ordained elders (282).

512 Ibid., 119. Holloway notes that “The affirmation that the supreme power in the church resides in the people was the natural consequent of conceiving of the church as a spiritual republic and representative commonwealth.” This also explains Hodge’s deviation from Samuel Miller’s explication of the Ministerial Offices (someone he rarely deviated from) by insisting on the lay status of the Ruling Elders. The “lay theory” of the Ruling Elder was generally upheld at Princeton after Hodge and held closer to Westminster than Miller and the Southern “Presbyter theory.” Holloway III, “The Princeton Ecclesiology,” 204-05. See also Charles Hodge, “Validity of Romish Baptism,” in The Church and Its Polity, ed. Durant and A.A. Hodge (New York: Nelson, 1845), 202.

513 Hodge, The Church and Its Polity, 124. For Hodge, the appropriate biblical title was “presbyter,” while Campbell preferred “bishop” or simply “elder.” Both, however, were referring to a teaching and oversight office in the local congregation. Hodge leaned on Calvin in his further explanation, writing, “[The] official presbyters of the New Testament were bishops; for, as [Calvin] says, “Quicumque verbi ministerio funguntur, is titulum episcoporum (Scriptura) tribuit.” But of the ruling elders, [Calvin] adds, “Gubernatores fuisse existimo seniores ex plebe delectos, qui censurœ morum et exercendœ discipline una cum episcopis prœessent.” Institutio, &c. IV. 3. 8. This is the old, healthful, conservative doctrine of the Presbyterian Church.” Ibid., 130. The above section of Calvin’s Institutes is repeated almost verbatim in Campbell’s discussion of the “senatorial” form of ecclesial government, with the two enduring offices being Bishops and Elders. Although it is Hodge that quotes him, Campbell clearly knew and almost certainly utilized Calvin for his own ministerial understanding. For a rough comparison of Hodge and Campbell’s ministerial office see Appendix A.

514 Hodge, “Relation of the Church and State.” Hodge’s “regional” character of the Church was obviously Presbyterian and more formal in nature than Campbell’s, though Hodge rarely attends to this and never gives this particular ordering divine warrant. For instance, Hodge writes, “Our constitution declares that synods and councils are an ordinance of God for the goverment [sic] of the Church, but for the particular constitution and mutual relation of such councils, she asserts no express command or uniform apostolic usage.” Hodge, The Church and Its Polity,
promoted an orderly structure to the Church while attempting to avoid a formalism that constrained the evangelical piety intended to inhabit the Church — a sort of *mediated centre* within the evangelical world.\textsuperscript{515}

**Essential Duality**

There was a point of distinction between Hodge and Campbell’s ecclesiological structure that was substantial, however. It can be summed up by simply noting that for Hodge the “organization” of the Church was not essential to its nature.\textsuperscript{516} There was no ontological connection between the outward manifestation of the Church and its *raison d’être*. This dualism will be explored further in the following chapter within the section on the visible and invisible church. A brief examination of Hodge’s sacramentology here will help to clarify his understanding of the structural organization of the Church more fully.\textsuperscript{517}

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\textsuperscript{516} Reynolds, “Charles Hodge’s Ecclesiastical Elenetics,” 1, 250.

\textsuperscript{517} The sacramental dispute between Hodge and Nevin is well known and will be referenced in the following paragraphs. However, because Hodge and Campbell held to such a similar organizational understanding of the Church, Hodge’s sacramentology is brought into even greater relief. Hodge’s famous introduction to his debate with Nevin on the Lord’s Supper is simply, “We differ from him indeed, essentially, as to the whole subject, not only as to the historical question, but as to what is the true doctrine.” He then concluded near the end of the 50-page review, “The lowest Puritan, ultra Protestant, or sectary in the land, who truly believes in Christ, is nearer Calvin than Dr. Nevin; and has more of the true spirit and theology of the Reformed church, than is to be found in this book.” Hodge, “Review: The Mystical Presence.”

Though Campbell never addressed Hodge’s sacramentology directly, he did engage at length with Samuel Miller’s book on baptism: Samuel Miller, *Infant Baptism Scriptural and Reasonable: And Baptism by Sprinkling or...*
Hodge began his 1841 section on Baptism and the Lord’s Supper in his popular *The Way of Life* by claiming, “whatever other important ends they may be intended to serve, [they] were appointed as a mode of publicly professing our faith in the gospel.” At the most fundamental level, an outward ordinance of the Church was intended to function as a way to communicate the teaching of the Church while expressing and enhancing the inward faith of the individual. Within this statement there are three things to take note of that will be explored below: an emphasized pedagogical function of the ordinances; the primacy of the individual; and an implied dualism between material and spiritual.

Hodge did not go as far as the 16th-century reformer Huldrych Zwingli in stating that the sacraments were merely the “objective presentation of the truth which they signify.” Yet the idea that the ordinances had the primary task of presenting doctrine was prominent in Hodge. They were tangible teaching aids for the strengthening of faith in the Church, which was the school of orthodox doctrine. Like any other tool, their true value was not in the aid *per se*, but...
in the deeper immaterial truth it communicated. Hodge rebuffed any suggestion beyond a pedagogical function of the ordinances, denying “real objective force” to the ordinances or to any outward structure of the Church for that matter.521 Here we have a stark difference from Campbell, who celebrated the ordinances as “Wells of salvation,”522 compared to Hodge who claimed they held no “extraordinary power.”523 “Christ is present in the sacraments in no other sense than he is present in the word” he claimed, “Neither [sacrament] has any virtue in itself. Both are used by the Spirit, as means of communicating Christ and his benefits to believers.”524

Combined with this pedagogical function of the ordinances, Hodge also viewed them to be fundamentally for and about the individual rather than the wider community. They were less teaching aids for the classroom than they were tools for the individual tutor. He felt the benefits of the ordinances were principally found in the individual faith of each believer as a kind of “badge of discipleship.”525 In an extended metaphor that Hodge used to expose the flaw of the “ritualists,” he dismissed the idea of the Church as a “convent of the middle ages” acting as a “storehouse of divine grace,” in which “the treasures are in the custody of its officers.” The “treasures” were the “nourishment” of those who came to the convent – clearly Hodge’s allusion to the Church’s sacraments – and yet he insisted that the “analogy fails” because “[food] could be obtained elsewhere than at the convent gates.” The corporate practice of the ordinances was not the monopoly of the ecclesial community, but simply one way to be spiritually fed as an

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524 Ibid.
525 Hodge, The Way of Life, 186. For Ludwig von Gerlach’s (who was a mentor and close friend of Hodge’s from his travels) “post script” critique of Hodge’s sacramentology in The Way of Life, despite his overall praise for the work, see Archibald Alexander Hodge, The Life of Charles Hodge (New York: Scribner’s Sons, 1880), 329–30.
individual Christian. The relevance here is in showing that the structures and organization of the Church do not have an ontological connection to, and certainly no monopoly over, the “nourishment” needed for the true Church, which was simply an “aggregate of individuals.”

Finally, it is not simply historians that have accused Hodge of a pronounced dualism, but even his own peers – especially Nevin – noticed this reality. When this dualism came to bear upon his sacramentology, it enlarged the pedagogical emphasis as well. The materiality of the ordinances was stripped down to the immateriality of the spiritual truth. Or as Hodge explained the “real presence” within the Lord’s Supper: “The presence is to the mind, the object is not presented to the senses, but apprehended by faith. It is a presence of virtue and efficacy not of propinquit.y.”

Or, in reference to the other ordinance,

In like manner it is not external baptism that makes a man a Christian, but the baptism of the Spirit, of which the washing with water is the appointed symbol. The two are not necessarily connected, and where the latter is wanting, the former can be of no avail… He is not a Christian who is one outwardly, nor is that baptism which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Christian who is one inwardly, and the baptism which is unto salvation, is of the heart, in the spirit and not in the letter.

It was not simply a sacramental dualism, however, as Hodge continued to promote the tradition of laying on hands at the ordination service (which was not a sacrament to him), though he saw “no necessity or peculiar importance to be attached to it” as Campbell did. The outward

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528 For an excellent reprinted version of Nevin’s extended response to Hodge’s review of *The Mystical Presence*, with additional introductory material and commentary, see Nevin and Hodge, *Coena Mystica*. Nevin’s most succinct critique of this dualism is that the meaning and effect of the ordinances are “sublimated in full into the spirit world” (168).
529 Hodge, “Review: The Mystical Presence.”
531 Hodge, *The Church and Its Polity*, 295. Not only does Hodge not think that ordination confers any grace, but he is at odds with himself over whether it even confers office. See Hodge, *The Church and Its Polity*. In the first instance, contra the Romanists, writes Hodge, “Ordination confers neither grace nor office. It is the solemn recognition of the vocation of the Holy Ghost, which may be effectually demonstrated to the Church in other ways” (87). However, later in dialogue with fellow Presbyterians, he claimed, “We have shown, that according to our constitution, ordination confers office” (280).
structures of the Church and the inward Christian faith were “not necessarily connected.” “The being of a Church,” concluded Hodge, “does not depend upon the ministry, nor the being of the ministry on the rite of ordination.”

In a telling paragraph near the end of his review of Nevin’s *The Mystical Presence*, Hodge turned his attention from speaking strictly of the sacraments to conclude, “[The book’s] whole spirit is churchy. It makes religion to be a church life… It is the form, the spirit, the predominance of these things, which give [Nevin’s] book a character as different as can be from the healthful, evangelical free spirit of Luther or Calvin.” This transition helps show how the previous discussion of the sacraments colours Hodge’s teaching on the structure and authority of the Church. The dualism, individualism, and the pedagogical emphasis of the sacraments are constitutive of his broader understanding of ecclesial organization. At most Hodge saw the inward or spiritual life as the animating reality of the formal organization and structuring of the Church; and at the least, the outward shape and practices were empty signs pointing to the really real, the immaterial, individualized Spirit-filled life. The structure and authority was the bene-esse, not the esse of the true Church. In a stark example, Hodge writes, “The wandering savage who has heard the truth, who believes and declares it, is a member of this church, as truly as any minister or elder.” Hodge believed, according to Reynolds who borrows a line from

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532 Hodge, “Validity of Romish Baptism,” 201.
533 Hodge, “Review: The Mystical Presence.”
534 Hart notes, “The propensity of Edwards and Finney to stress the personal experience of faith over an ecclesial Christian identity might be understandable in the context of their active promotion of revivals, but the case of Charles Hodge, remembered more as Presbyterian than evangelist, is harder to explain and so all the more revealing of evangelicalism’s subjective and individualistic conception of the church.” Hart, “The Church in Evangelical Theologies, Past and Future,” 33.
535 For a discussion of this distinction, see Reynolds, “Charles Hodge’s Ecclesiastical Elenetics,” 100.
536 Charles Hodge, “Review: A Plea for Voluntary Societies and a Defence of the Decisions of the General Assembly of 1836 against the Strictures of the Princeton Reviewers and Others,” in *The Book Reviews of Charles Hodge*, Logos Bible Software, 1837. Compare this statement with the most “liberal” Campbell, in the so-called “Lunenburg Letter” (the epistle sent from a “sister” in Lunenburg) and the contrast is evident. Though Campbell cannot avoid carving out salvific space for the un-immersed in all Christian “parties,” arguing against the absolute necessity of believer’s baptism for salvation, he cannot normalize it or prioritize it in the same eager way that Hodge
Robert Jenson, “that faith in Christ and identification with the church-community [were] distinguishable spiritual acts.”

If this was not proof enough of Hodge’s disjunction between the true Church and the outward structure that could in theory be sloughed off without losing anything vital, his famous defense of Roman Catholic baptism puts the issue to rest. At first pass it would seem that Hodge’s very public and very pronounced defense of the Roman sacrament would undermine the entire argument just made. In actual fact, however, it is the strongest proof for what has just been outlined. Throughout his whole defense, Hodge chooses to predicate his argument on his own particular ecclesiological vision – accusing other Presbyterians, ironically, of a “spirit of Popery.” In no way was Hodge attempting to justify the Roman Catholic Church in toto, as he seems to do in response to the “ritualists.”

Campbell, “Any Christians Among Protestant Parties,” *The Millennial Harbinger*, New Series, I (1837): 411–14. In his most direct – though still cryptic – approach in the letter, Campbell writes, “The preachers of ‘essentials,’ as well as the preachers of ‘nonessentials,’ frequently err. The Essentialist may disparage the heart, while the Non-essentialist despises the institution. The latter makes void the institutions of Heaven, while the former appreciates not the mental bias on which God looketh most. My correspondent may belong to a class who think that we detract from the authority and value of an institution the moment we admit the bare possibility of any one being saved without it. But we choose rather to associate with those who think that they do not undervalue either seeing or hearing, but affirming that neither of them, nor both of them together, are essential to life. I would not sell one of my eyes for all the gold on earth; yet I could live without it” (413). There is no doubt that Campbell would place Hodge wholly in the “nonessentials” cadre of evangelical theologians. Campbell’s response was so contentious that he was forced to write two follow-up articles: Campbell, “Christians Among the Sects,” *The Millennial Harbinger*, New Series, I (1837): 506-08; Campbell, “Any Christians Among the Sects?,” *The Millennial Harbinger*, New Series, I (1837): 561–68.

537 Reynolds, “Charles Hodge’s Ecclesiastical Elengitics,” 263. The line is taken from Robert W. Jenson, *Unbaptized God: The Basic Flaw in Ecumenical Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1992). This line is set in the context of Hodge’s rejection of the Reformers’ employment of the Church as Mother. Reynolds also helpfully includes Mangina’s account of the difference between the Reformation and post-Reformation theologians’ take on *mater ecclesia*: Joseph L. Mangina, “Bearing the Marks of Jesus: The Church in the Economy of Salvation in Barth and Hauerwas,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 52, no. 3 (August 1999): 269–305. However, Reynolds misses (or omits, for good reason) Hodge’s clear acceptance of the title (*mater ecclesia*) in his defense of Roman Catholic baptism. Hodge does not reject the idea, but mangles its understanding beyond recognition, stating, “It is a common saying of Protestant theologians, ‘No man has God for his father, who has not the Church for his mother.’ This is only saying, with the Scriptures, that there is no salvation out of Christ” (208). Hodge does not justify his claim that it is a common saying among Protestant theologians (presumably “ritualists”), nor does he unpack the creative definition he gives that presses the limits of logic.

538 Reynolds claims that “Hodge was the only significant non high-church American theologian of his period who maintained that the Roman Catholic church was a Christian church”: Reynolds, “Charles Hodge’s Ecclesiastical Elengitics,” 250–51.

539 Hodge, “Validity of Romish Baptism,” 199. Those prominent members who cast a negative vote included Thornwell, Rice, and McGill. Hodge was not a voting member of the 1845 Assembly, though he was in attendance. The ironic accusation is entirely premised on the fact that Hodge felt they – like most Catholics –
reiterated the appropriateness of titles such as the “antichrist,” and the “synagogue of Satan” when directed toward the “Popish hierarchy and its corruptions.” Rather his entire defense of the ordinance was built on a simple syllogism: “[The] Church consists of [all] true professors of religion”; there are true professors of religion within the Roman Catholic Church; therefore, there are members of the true Church in the Roman Catholic Church. From this conclusion, Hodge extends the logic to justify (some) Roman Catholic priests as legitimate presbyters of true believers, and he thereby considers the ordinance of baptism valid in matter, form, and intention. Most pertinent here, however, is his explanation of why there can be true believers and true presbyters in a structure that is a “synagogue of Satan.” Hodge concluded,

The Church, as such, is not an organization; any more than the human race, as such, is a society. Men must organize and live in society; but their organizing does not make them men, nor members of the human race. In like manner the Church, or the called, as such,

associated the outward organization and structure of the Church with its essence. Confusing the bene esse with the esse was the true “spirit of Popery.”

Ibid., 215. For a more in depth and nuanced discussion about the derogatory titles Protestants had given the Roman Catholic Church, see Hodge’s follow-up article: Charles Hodge, “Article V - Articles in the ‘Presbyterian’ by Theophilus on the Subject: Is Baptism in the Church of Rome Valid?” Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review 18, no. 2 (1846): 320–44. The defense, in itself, would not have been accepted by Roman Catholics themselves as it effectively made the Roman Catholic Church into a presbyterian (small “p”) church with the added apostasy of popish hierarchy. Like a healthy body with a cancerous growth on the skin, Hodge saw the errors of Rome as only surface level because, ultimately, organizational error was never systemic error in the same way that heresy of salvific doctrine was for Hodge. His defense thus was not a defense of the Roman Catholic explication of the sacrament of Baptism and likely would have been unrecognizable to a 19th-century Catholic. Contra Paul Keith Conkin, The Uneasy Center: Reformed Christianity in Antebellum America (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 228.

541 This syllogism is unpacked doctrinally by Hodge: “They [the R.C. Church] retain the doctrine of the Incarnation, which we know from the infallible word of God, is a life-giving doctrine. They retain the whole doctrine of the Trinity. They teach the doctrine of atonement far more fully and accurately than multitudes of professedly orthodox Protestants. They hold a much higher doctrine, as to the necessity of divine influence, than prevails among many whom we recognize as Christians. They believe in the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and in eternal life and judgment. These doctrines are in their creeds, and however they may be perverted and overlaid, still as general propositions they are affirmed. And it must be remembered, that it is truth presented in general propositions, and not with subtle distinctions, that saves the soul.” Hodge, “Validity of Romish Baptism,” 208 (emphasis added). He added, however, in the follow-up article that “the Scriptures do not warrant us in fixing the minimum of divine truth by which the Spirit may save the soul.” In other words, he stopped short of outlining and concretizing a set of fundamental doctrines. Hodge, “Article V - Articles in the ‘Presbyterian’ by Theophilus on the Subject: Is Baptism in the Church of Rome Valid?” 340.

542 He actually builds his argument the opposite way, from the matter, form, and intention to the priests as legitimate presbyters and finally to the doctrinal basis for the true believers in the Roman Catholic Church. However, the most basic building block (foundation) of his argument is at the end with the “true believers,” which acts as a kind of fulcrum to leverage the rest of the logic.
are not an organized body, though it is their duty to organize. But organization does not
make them a Church, but being members of the Church, i.e. κλητοι, they associate for
certain prescribed purposes. It seems to us that a large portion of the false reasoning
connected with this whole subject, arises from the erroneous assumption that
organization enters into the very idea of the Church… [The Church] is merely a
collective term for the people of God. Since “the called” are, according to the uniform
usage of the epistles of the New Testament, the effectually called, or true believers, it
follows that the Church is a collective term for true believers.543

For Hodge, the life of faith had no final connection to the offices, ordinances, and organization
of the outward life of the Church beyond them being a repository of teachers and keepers of
orthodox doctrine.544

**Nevin**

Unlike Hodge and Campbell’s preoccupation with ecclesial polity, Nevin seemed to
purposefully avoid the topic in his writing, failing to produce a single work touching on the
organizational structure of the Church. This is even more surprising since Nevin was relentless in
his promotion of two operating theological principles that, taken together, underscored the
importance of ecclesial structure. The first principle was an insistence on the Church as an object
of faith, and the second was an anti-dualism that left him emphasizing the unity of the *ideal* and
*actual* Church. The result was an *a priori* ruling out of two common antebellum approaches to
issues of polity: pure expedience or *jure divino*.545 Establishing and expanding on Nevin’s
principles will allow this section to probe further into Nevin’s understanding of the overall
structure and authority of the Church and how it might inform one *type* of antebellum
evangelical ecclesiology.

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543 Hodge, “Validity of Romish Baptism,” 205-06 (emphasis added). For a corroborative manuscript that is
beyond the timeframe of this study, see Hodge’s response to Pope Pius IX’s invitation to Vatican I: Charles Hodge,

544 Hodge, “Validity of Romish Baptism,” 205.

545 The term *jure divino* here is being used in a technical sense, as will be shown below.
The Church as an Object of Faith

Much has been made of a single line that Nevin wrote after the reemergence of The Mercersburg Review in 1867 (the previous run ended in 1861). Defending the Revised Liturgy of the German Reformed Church, for which he was arguably the principal author, the now-President of the recently merged Franklin and Marshall College appeared to tip his hand toward his true predilection for ecclesiastical structure by writing, “We freely admit, our theology is more Anglican than German.” The admission, however, was not, as it has often been taken, a statement about the sacraments, or a confession of episcopal preference, or even a generic profession of Tractarian solidarity, though there were parts of all of these that were true and implied in the statement. Instead, Nevin’s most basic intent with his declaration was to affirm the centrality of the Church as an object of faith. “The Church” announced Nevin, “challenges our faith as an essential part of the Christian salvation; a mystery, to the acknowledgment of which we are shut up in the inward movement of the Creed.” Nevin’s point was less about the

546 Although this study has limited its scope to 1830-1866 because of Campbell’s death (March 1866) and the Civil War ending (Spring 1865), it is relevant to bring this quote in from Nevin because it has coloured so much of the secondary writing on his ecclesiology. From 1857 to 1861 Emmanuel Gerhart and Philip Schaff edited the MR; however, when it was revived in 1867 the editorial duties were passed to Henry Harbaugh, who was a one-time student of Nevin and Schaff, and who in the early 60s became the Professor of Didactic and Practical Theology at the Seminary.

547 Nevin, “Our Relation to Germany,” ed. H. Harbaugh, The Mercersburg Review 14 (1867): 632. The article was a defense of the liturgy after it was partially criticized by Dorner. For secondary usages of the quote, see DiPuccio, The Interior Sense of Scripture, 180n28; Andrew Donald Black, “A ‘Vast Practical Embarrassment’: John W. Nevin, The Mercersburg Theology, and The Church Question” (Ph.D., University of Dayton, 2013), 281; Linden J. DeBie, “German Idealism in Protestant Orthodoxy: The Mercersburg Movement, 1840-1860” (Ph.D., McGill University (Canada), 1987), 41; Sam Hamstra, “John Williamson Nevin: The Christian Ministry” (Ph.D., Marquette University, 1990), 143; Pretila, “The Oxford Movement’s Influence upon German American Protestantism,” 18. DeBie does the best job putting the quote in context by linking it to the early creeds, but still omits the key point that the Church, for Nevin, is a necessary article of faith, the logical and proper end or telos of his “German” Christology – something he feels the Germans (whether Reformed, Lutheran, or Unionistic) had failed to unfold fully. The quote is not in support of the Anglican polity (when Nevin used “Anglican” he was almost always speaking of the Church of England), as the lengthy section after the quote strongly condemns a “State Church” ideal. Surprisingly, both Woolverton and Steeper fail to mention the quote at all: Steeper, “Between Mercersburg and Oxford”; Woolverton, “John Williamson Nevin and the Episcopalians.”

548 Nevin, “Our Relation to Germany,” 632. Simply put, Nevin felt that English theology had more readily engaged in the “Church Question” because they, like Nevin, “[stood] upon the old Creeds”; whereas German (technically Prussian) theology was caught up in the Erastian systems of governance and neglected the early Church. Though Nevin dismissed the primitivism of much Anglicanism that stressed the first four centuries of the Church, he also wanted to avoid the lack of historical consciousness in much of the modern German Church by rehabilitating
particular structure of the Church – though it did impinge upon this reality – and more about the relationship between the organization, structure, and sacraments of the Church and the economy of salvation. Affirming that the Church is an object of faith did not tell his readers what the Church should look like, but it demanded that the Church’s structures were not incidental to issues of salvation in the manner Hodge seemed to be suggesting they were.

At the same time that Hodge was decoupling the bene-esse from the esse of the true Church by relegating issues of polity, ministry, and organization to the former, Nevin was travelling in the opposite direction by expanding the esse to include much of the same material Hodge had demoted. Ironically, there was no greater example of this distinction than at their exact point of agreement: the validity of Roman Catholic baptism. Like Hodge, Nevin was aghast at the overwhelming vote of the 1845 General Assembly of the Old School Presbyterians, claiming that the pronouncement had the effect of “unchurching virtually thus the whole church as it stood at the birth of the Reformation and for at least twelve hundred years before, and making such men as Augustine and Chrysostom, as well as Luther and Calvin of a later day, to be no better than unbaptized heathens.” Right down to using Calvin and Luther as examples, Nevin’s response echoed what Hodge wrote in his review of the Assembly. However, upon closer examination, significant fissures appear in their apparently unified conclusion. While Hodge argued for the validity of the Roman sacrament in spite of the Roman ecclesiastical accoutrement – which he found not only unnecessary, but heretical – Nevin endorsed not simply

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550 Hodge writes, “What stern necessity has induced the Assembly to pronounce Calvin, Luther, and all the men of that generation, as well as thousands who with no other than Romish baptism have since been received into the Protestant churches, to have lived and died unbaptized?” Hodge, “Article IV - The General Assembly,” 444.
the sacrament of the Roman Church, but at least until the Reformation era, its structural context too. “This implies of course,” maintained Nevin, “that even the Papacy itself… came in with reason and right, and had a mission to fulfill in the service of Christianity that could not have been fulfilled as well in any other way.”

For Hodge, the validity of Roman Catholic Baptism was secured by contorting the ordinance to fit a (Northern, New Side, Old School, Princetonian) Presbyterianism ecclesiology of his own theological persuasion, particularly in relation to the centrality of the individual’s faith in the act. Conversely, for Nevin, the “objective force in the ordinance” was not procured by the “mind of the worshipper, but from the power of the transaction or thing done itself.”

The “thing done itself,” however, could not be extracted from the churchly context in which it

551 Nevin, “Early Christianity,” 1851, 561. It should be noted that sometime between the mid-40s and the early 50s, Nevin’s attitude toward the Papacy improved significantly. By the 50s Nevin rejected the typical Protestant calls of “antichrist,” though he stops short of entirely vindicating the present state of the papacy. However, even his legitimation of the papacy before the Reformation is a sharp deviation from Hodge’s view. Nevin’s strong vindication of the pre-Reformation papacy – that there was no other way, so to speak – only logically follows if one holds the same specificity of providence as Nevin regarding the outworking of the divine through history. Here one wonders how Nevin could chastise Hodge’s doctrine of election with such acuity and miss the correlate within his own work of the necessity of divine unfolding through time – there could be no other way(s) than how it was! How is Nevin’s rigid understanding of the doctrine of providence (worked out as the divine unfolding in time) altogether different than Hodge’s rigid doctrine of election (though promoted in an atemporal register by Hodge)?

After Vatican I, Nevin became more disillusioned with the Papacy. This is not surprising since his writings prior to the council indicated that he would have a strong reaction to pronouncements like Papal infallibility and supremacy. See especially his dialogue with the Roman Catholic convert Orestes Brownson: Nevin, “Brownson’s Quarterly Review,” The Mercersburg Review 2 (1850): 33–80; Nevin, “Brownson’s Review Again.”

552 For the significant role that “faith” played in Hodge’s understanding of the sacraments, see Hodge, The Way of Life, 186ff.

553 Nevin, “The Anglican Crisis,” 370. Another unique (and surprising) feature of Hodge’s theology that drove this point home was his insistence on the salvation of unbaptized infants. He was in the minority of 19th-century Calvinistic thinkers who held this view, and he based it entirely on the lack of capacity for “faith” in an infant, which was the active ingredient necessary for an effective ordinance. Since the ordinance could not possibly be effective for infants, then God’s grace would cover all infants, whether baptized or not. This is also why Hodge placed such a great emphasis on confirmation as the interjection of that active ingredient to the previous act of infant baptism – it was the completion of the ordinance. See Hodge, “Presbyterian Liturgies (1855),” 157ff; Hodge, “Validity of Romish Baptism,” 198.

Nevin describes the Hodge-like opinion of most Protestants as follows: “Romanism is a tissue of abomination and absurdities from beginning to end… The proper cure for all such mummeries is to give up the church mania altogether, to discard the whole idea of sacramental grace, to fall back on the Bible and private judgment as the true and only safe rule of Protestantism, and to make Christianity thus a matter of reason and common sense.” Nevin, “The Anglican Crisis,” 362. Interestingly, however, though Campbell is surely a target of Nevin’s “Bible and private judgment” barb, the former is much closer to Mercersburg than Princeton in his efficacious baptismal theology for the remission of sins.
was performed. Herein lay the difference between Hodge and Nevin’s defense of Roman Catholic baptism. Nevin did not premise his response on the same questions as Hodge: “Are there true Christians in the church; and, are the administrators of the ordinance valid?” Instead, his validation revolved around a single question, “Did the church that administered the sacrament understand itself to be a divine object of faith?”

The premise of Nevin’s question became his reductio ad absurdum into the 50s and 60s for all things related to the Church Question. Not only was this apparent in his numerous sacramental disputes, but it also arose in his understanding of the ministerial office. Nevin’s understanding of a divinely endowed clergy, not marshalled in a mechanical or magical way “nakedly and separately considered” but through “true succession [that] lay in the life of the Church as a whole,” was as shocking to most evangelicals as his explication of the Eucharist and Baptism, if not more so.554 “Ministers hold,” maintained Nevin matter-of-factly, “a divine power by apostolical succession.”555 Accordingly, Hamstra summarized Nevin’s understanding of the ministerial office, writing, “He proposed a pastoral office that is an indispensable extension of the life-bearing quality of the church and a necessary link in the process of salvation.”556 In other words, both hot-button issues among antebellum evangelicals – sacraments and ordination – returned to the same premise: “We must believe in a divine church, in order to believe in divine sacraments, or in a divine ministry under any form.”557

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557 Nevin, “The Anglican Crisis,” 379. See also Nevin, “The Old Doctrine of Christian Baptism,” The Mercersburg Review 12 (1860): 195–215. More has been written on Nevin’s sacramentology than any other area of his theology. This is not surprising since his most famous work is The Mystical Presence, and his subsequent debate with Hodge has been the subject of three separate books in the last ten years: Littlejohn, The Mercersburg Theology and the Quest for Reformed Catholicity; Nevin and Hodge, Coena Mystica: Borneman, Church, Sacrament, and American Democracy. However, Hamstra is right to focus on his theology of ministry as another key point of
Condemning the Pope as the “Man of Sin” and advocating a “No-church” and “Non-sacrament” system that emphasized a “broad and full rupture” with the pre-Reformation tradition of the Church, as many Protestants of the antebellum period did, was tragically ironic according to Nevin. If anything, it was these Protestants who more accurately embodied the biblical title “Man of Sin,” because of their denial of the Church as an object of faith as found in the Creed. The denial of the divine ontology of the Church was, for Nevin, the fundamental error of the vast majority of evangelicals in the antebellum era. Accordingly, Nevin continually redirected practical questions of polity and structure by asking his own rhetorical question:

Is the idea of a really supernatural constitution under this name [the Church], as it once universally prevailed, a sober truth still for Christian faith, or has it become a dangerous though beautiful fiction? That is the question; the first and most fundamental question here, before which the whole controversy about bishops and elders, liturgical forms and free prayer, becomes of only secondary account.

**The Unity of the Ideal and Actual Church**

Roman Catholic baptism was simply one example of Nevin’s and Hodge’s agreement at a surface level, but when the layers were pulled back, there were fundamentally different theological rationales for their conclusions. Another example of this veneer of agreement was

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558 Nevin, “The Anglican Crisis,” 394. This position had been unchanged for Nevin since his publication of *Antichrist*.

their explicit rejection of a *jure divino* understanding of the structure of the Church.\textsuperscript{560} Hodge’s rejection, as discussed above, was premised on expedience, where the structures and organization of the Church were untethered from the essence of the church and adapted to the exigencies of the age with the guidance of his three broad biblical principles. Nevin, on the other hand, promoted an evolutionary polity that emerged from the “dialectic thorns” of ecclesial tradition.\textsuperscript{561} For Hodge, rejecting a *jure divino* polity meant emphasizing the distinction between the *invisible* and the *visible* Church, as the eternal truth of God had a certain static *givenness* to it (the gospel facts!) that subsisted in the *invisible* Church, but did not necessarily touch the *visible* structures. Nevin, however, held to a more *dynamic* understanding of God’s revelation, and therefore the outer church (what he sometimes called the *actual*) was to adapt and change in response to the inner reality.\textsuperscript{562}

If Nevin recoiled at the idea of a *jure divino* polity, he went to great lengths to articulate what a true high church ecclesiology might be – one that retained a divine ontology. “There are two sorts of high churchmanship,” he admitted in one of his responses to Robert Wilberforce.\textsuperscript{563}

The *jure divino* model of many 19\textsuperscript{th}-century theologians, alleged Nevin, “starts with a certain system of outward order, as though it were the first thing, the main thing, settled and sure by divine appointment in and of itself, and made to inclose [sic] thus externally all truth besides as

\textsuperscript{560} They were not, however, responding primarily to the same *jure divino* proposals. Hodge’s was mostly interested in rebutting the Southern Old Schoolers, though he did occasionally reference the American Episcopalians in the same conversations. Nevin was predominantly writing against Anglicans (though mostly of the English Tractarian persuasion), Roman Catholics, and only occasionally Presbyterians.

\textsuperscript{561} Nevin, “The Anglican Crisis,” 396.

\textsuperscript{562} For the most complete explication of this in Nevin’s theology, see DiPuccio, *The Interior Sense of Scripture*.

its necessary boundary and hedge.”

This, in Nevin’s view, ruled out the organic nature of the evolution of the Church by permanently universalizing an actual church structure that could not adapt or evolve responsibly to the inner reality of the ideal church. “The day of mere outward tradition,” concluded Nevin confidently, “is fast passing away.” Instead the actual structure of the church was “joined with [its inner “Divine element”] in concrete union, and so deriv[es] from it continually all its force.” In this way, he claimed, “there is another way of holding and asserting the claims of the Church,” that is high church without being jure divino. In point of fact, asserted Nevin, a true high church ecclesiology did not begin “with the circumference of Christianity, but with its centre”:

In this way the idea of the Church comes first; and what its actualization may be found to comprehend subsequently, is apprehended and accepted in such living inward connection, not as something external to the proper christian life, but as the very form and expression of this life itself.

The result of Nevin’s continuing impulse to redirect questions of the Church away from the “accidents and circumstances of Protestantism” and toward its organic entelechy meant he avoided a ream of questions that dealt with the specifics of ecclesial polity and organization. He made this clear, writing, “The fundamental question is not of the sacraments, nor of a liturgy, nor of the church year, nor of ordination and apostolical succession, nor of presbyters, bishops, or popes.” This was not because Nevin saw these outward structures as merely ornamental to the true Church. In fact, for Nevin, there was an essential connection of the external organization

565 Nevin, “The Anglican Crisis,” 392. Protestants were not the only Christians who could fall into this hollow, outward-focused jure divino ecclesiology. In his exchange with Brownson, Nevin accuses the Roman Catholic theologian, writing, “[Brownson] will play the very Yankee himself in this new game; he will be a Puritan Romanist… He will abjure philosophy in religion, and take all in the way simply of authority. It shall be his reason here to silence reasoning, and his will to have no freedom whatever.” Nevin, “Wilberforce on the Eucharist,” 176.
568 Ibid., 192. See also Nevin, “The Anglican Crisis,” 378–79.
570 Nevin, “Thoughts on the Church,” The Mercersburg Review 10 (1858): 188.
and polity of the Church to the “nature of the Church itself… in its ideal character.” They were “different necessary sides of the same general evidence”; nevertheless, there was a prioritization that need to be “observed” where “the inward shall be counted first, and the outward second, and the last be felt to depend continually upon the first.” The external skin – the reification of the ideal – was vitally connected to the providential unfolding of the Church. It may not have been a \textit{jure divino} polity that extracted details mechanically from Scripture, but Nevin certainly balked at any theological pragmatism where “such organs and functions may be indifferently in any form, or in no form whatever.” The structure and authority of the Church could not be considered \textit{adiaphorous} because they were materially tethered to the unfolding ideal Church; yet the alternative extreme needed to be avoided as well, so “the organs and functions make not of themselves the being of the body; they are parts only in any case, which owe their whole vitality and vigor to the general system in which they are comprehended, and away from this are of no worth whatever.” The divine ontology of the Church was rooted in the ideal, but through its providential unfolding there was a substantial connection between the ideal and the actual. This meant that the external structure of the Church was not \textit{adiaphorous} while simultaneously avoiding the designation \textit{jure divino} as understood by most evangelicals and Roman Catholics.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{571} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{572} Nevin, “Trench’s Lectures,” \textit{The Mercersburg Review} 2 (1850): 608.
\item \textsuperscript{573} Nevin, “The Anglican Crisis,” 378.
\item \textsuperscript{574} In this, I disagree with Hamstra that issues of polity were \textit{adiaphoront} for Nevin. Hamstra understands the priority of the ideal over and above the actual, but he fails to grasp the anti-dualistic impulse of Nevin that could not relegate issues of polity to \textit{things indifferent}. The mistake is understandable, but it misses the philosophical foundation that Nevin relied on and which Hodge was in a perpetual state of nervousness about. Hamstra, “John Williamson Nevin,” 193. For Nevin’s strongest counter to Hamstra’s conclusion, see Nevin, “The Church Supernatural,” \textit{Weekly Messenger of the German Reformed Church} 12 (1847): 2474. Here Nevin not only defends \textit{The Mystical Presence} after Berg condemned it, but goes on the offensive and accuses Berg of being on the road to “Racow” (just as Berg accused Nevin of being on the road to “Rome”) because, at heart, Nevin insisted Berg must be a Socinian.
\item \textsuperscript{575} Nevin, “The Anglican Crisis,” 378.
\item \textsuperscript{576} As should be clear by the cumulative effect of this section, Nevin’s ecclesiology was certainly driven and directed by “divine law” (\textit{jure divino}), but not in the way most of his peers would have understood the term. The
\end{itemize}
Constructive Polity?

So what can be said, if anything, of Nevin’s understanding of the structure and authority of the Church if these two theological principles raised up the importance of a visible Church while simultaneously avoiding any definitive position on specifics? Nevin’s theological explication about the structure of the Church focuses on what it is not much more readily than it provides a constructive account. Perhaps the closest Nevin came to outlining an ecclesial polity was a rudimentary typology he constructed in his article on “The Anglican Crisis.” Here he outlined four available options for the structure in the Church:

1. A “deliberate giving up of the sacramental system altogether.” This, in Nevin’s view, meant abandoning the idea of the Church as a divine object of faith and reduced itself, in expedient form, to a crude “Baptistic Independency, the extreme verge of unchurchly orthodoxy.”

2. There could also be a simpler option – which was swelling in popularity at the time – of giving up and going back, according to Nevin. That was the “full despair of Protestantism, and reconciliation in form with Rome” as exemplified by Newman in England and Brownson in America.

3. If neither of these fit one’s fancy, one could also seek a new revelation from which to construct a polity. A “miraculous dispensation on the part of God himself” would illuminate the organizational structure, similar to Irvingites, Mormons, and Swedenborgians or something not yet manifest.

4. Finally, a fourth and “last resort is offered… the only one it seems to us which is left for the thoughtful.” It was rooted, unsurprisingly in “the idea of historical development,” where both Catholicism and Protestantism were together considered “transitional only… the real womb both of the present and the future.”

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578 Ibid. The article is ostensibly about the conversions of many prominent Church of England members. Nevin concludes, “The secessions which have already taken place in this last form, are exceedingly significant… Newman was the greatest theologian in the English church, and next to him probably Archdeacon Manning.” Ibid., 389. Despite Nevin’s mention of Brownson here and their obvious ecclesiological differences, they were cordial in their exchange, with the Brownson admitting that Nevin was as “near an approach to being a Christian as is to be expected from one who opposes the Christian Church… It is refreshing to meet such an opponent, and we are sorry to add, that he is almost the only direct opponent we have ever had that we did not feel it a sort of degradation to meet.” Orestes Brownson, “Reply to the Mercersburg Review,” Brownson’s Quarterly Review 4 (1850): 191.
580 Ibid., 396.
The challenge in trying to unpack the “polity” of Nevin’s preferred choice was that it simply did not offer what it advertised: a constructive ecclesial polity.\textsuperscript{581} The three other options he used in contrast held some external structure with discernable features, but the fourth option was simply a philosophically driven, theological claim about God’s activity \textit{ad extra}. Nevin’s continual deflection of questions pertaining to the structure and external organization of the Church reveals a kind of anti-polity where the “progressive actualization of the life of the Church” made it impossible to establish universal organizational structures.\textsuperscript{582}

Unlike with Campbell and Hodge, where one could work backwards from their writing on polity to the theology that informed their opinions on ecclesial structure and authority, with Nevin, one must start with the theology and then only provisionally rule out certain external manifestations of the Church. Again, as with his Scriptural interpretation, he sought a theological \textit{fitness} (or \textit{fittingness}) between the dynamism of the \textit{ideal} Church and its reification in the \textit{actual} Church, the two sides of the coin which were “held together, not simply in man’s thought, but in God’s power, by a bond holding beyond nature altogether in the supernatural order of grace.”\textsuperscript{583} If this \textit{fitness} ruled out pure expedience and mechanical \textit{jure divino} ecclesologies – at least in the way Nevin understood them – then one is required to continually measure ecclesial polity by asking, “How shall the demands of the old Catholic faith be satisfied in true union with Protestant freedom?”\textsuperscript{584}

\textsuperscript{581} The point is that Nevin offered a broad sketch or vision of what the Church might look like (a sort of Catholic-Protestant synthesis), but no actual details as to how that might be arranged or constructed. There was also the challenge of Nevin basically putting the vast majority of Protestants in category #1. Hodge, for instance, would have cringed at being placed in a “Baptistic Independency” camp, while Campbell would not have accepted being labelled unsacramental, in the way Nevin was using the term. Where would Thornwell or Krauth or Muhlenberg fit? His typology is simply not as exhaustive as it is presented.

\textsuperscript{582} Nevin, “Brownson’s Quarterly Review,” 61. This extreme aversion to presenting a constructive proposal for ecclesial polity or structure is likely why not a single secondary work has been completed on Nevin’s “external” polity or structure, aside from some work on his liturgical renewal.


\textsuperscript{584} Nevin, “The Anglican Crisis,” 395.
Baptistic polity could not satisfy the demands of a continuous organic unfolding of the Church; whereas, Roman Catholics focused too much on the past outward forms of the Church without a deeper discernment of the needed synthesis of Protestantism and Catholicism. And though Nevin felt it would be a “great relief” to find rest in the “Anglican Episcopacy” like an “Ararat of rest for the ark of Protestantism,” he concluded that this too “was not an adequate solution for the great Church problem of the present time.” Nor was Nevin simply playing favourites in support of his own adopted denomination of the German Reformed Church as he regularly lamented its confused polity.

The lukewarm reception of the Revised Liturgy, from both inside and outside the German Reformed Church, is one of the most tangible examples of Nevin’s ecclesial no-man’s land. It


586 Nevin, “The Anglican Crisis,” 395, 391. Hamstra’s position that Nevin promoted an “episcopal authority” without an “episcopal structure” is accurate; yet this seems to compound the confusion, as Nevin offered no explanation of what this “episcopal authority” might look like without actual bishops (which the German Reformed Church did not have) or why episcopal structure was necessarily ruled out (or at least unnecessary). A hint, perhaps, into Nevin’s rejection of Anglicanism is appended to one of his articles on Cyprian in the context of the sacraments and the episcopacy, where he writes, “What charm can there be in an episcopate, that this rather than any other fragment of Peter’s ship as it originally sailed towards heaven, should be taken to carry away with it now, as a fragment, the power of a true church life? No. Anglicanism is not Cyprianic Christianity… The grand issue always, is that which lies between Protestantism and Romanism. This we are bound to look solemnly in the face.” Nevin, “Cyprian,” 387.

587 It is noteworthy, however, that two of Nevin’s sons and one daughter became Episcopalian. Robert Jenkins Nevin (3rd child) served for almost forty years as the first Rector of “St. Paul’s within the Walls” Episcopal Church in Rome, which was the first non-Roman Catholic Church built inside the old walls of the city. Richard Cecil Nevin (5th child) and Martha Finley Sayre (4th child and only daughter to marry) also aligned themselves with the Episcopal Church. Martha had two sons, John Nevin Sayre and Francis Bowes Sayre, who were also noted Episcopalians, with the former becoming a priest, professor, and well-known peace activist while the latter grew to fame as a Harvard Law professor and foreign diplomat (eventually Assistant Secretary of State). Francis married one of Woodrow Wilson’s daughters and they had a son, Francis Jr., who also became an Episcopal Priest and the Dean of the Cathedral in Washington, DC. Francis Jr. was usually known as the grandson of Woodrow Wilson; however, he seems to have been equally influenced by being the great-grandson of John Williamson Nevin.

588 In most of his major publications Nevin has some criticism for his own denomination. He lays some of them out clearly in his reply to Berg: see Nevin, “Dr. Berg’s Last Words.”

was a patchwork project that was sewn together largely from some twenty-five existing (Patristic, Reformation, and Post-Reformation) liturgies, most generously, argues Maxwell, borrowing from the Book of Common Prayer and the Catholic Apostolic Liturgy. However, rather than succeeding in producing a liturgical form that outwardly brought the “demands of the old Catholic faith… in true union with Protestant freedom,” the resource was never fully implemented in any German Reformed classis, and though some individual churches did integrate the Revised Liturgy, the inconsistent employment only added to the failure by dividing the denomination. Perhaps the lack of constructive proposals is what Nevin had in view when he admitted to his friend Henry Harbaugh that the “Mercersburg Theology” in attempting to address the Church Question, was never “able to solve in full the difficulties belonging to this great subject.” Moreover, he claimed, “On the contrary, [we] have always confessed [our] sense of vast practical embarrassment confronting [our] views.

Summary

The structure and authority of the Church preoccupied Campbell and Hodge immeasurably more than it did Nevin, as the former left behind a massive amount of material to


Maxwell, Worship and Reformed Theology, 199–201. The first source is not nearly as surprising as the second. However, both Schaff and Nevin had a keen interest in the Catholic Apostolic Church, the former from his upbringing and schooling in Germany and the latter admitting his debt to some of the CAC theology in his essay on “The Anglican Crisis” when he attributed much of the article’s thought to Heinrich W.J. Thiersch’s book Lectures on Catholicism and Protestantism. Nevin, “The Anglican Crisis,” 396.

Maxwell, Worship and Reformed Theology. Despite Nevin’s central position within the liturgical renewal cohort, it is difficult to entirely isolate Nevin, as the team of thirteen (though it varied at times) were actively working on different parts. One could hardly argue it was a solitary effort, promoting a single theological position. That being said, for the 1857 Provisional Liturgy it was Nevin who was tasked with the Ordination Service, and it was his liturgy that was approved with very little revision in the 1866 Order of Worship. The tepid reception of the Ordination Service liturgy, written by someone so seemingly out of line with antebellum evangelical views of ministry, is hardly a surprise. Hamstra isolated Nevin’s unique contribution within the liturgy (as it was not borrowed from other liturgies) to the following bold quote: “The office is of divine origin, and of truly supernatural character and force; flowing directly from the Lord Jesus Christ himself, as the fruit of his Resurrection and triumphant Ascension into heaven, and being designed by him to carry forward the purposes of his grace upon the earth, in the salvation of men by the Church, to the end of time.” Hamstra, “John Williamson Nevin,” 129.


Ibid.
sift through. It was Campbell and Nevin (admittedly in significantly different respects), however, who insisted that the external shape and organizational operation of the Church – including its ministerial ordering and sacraments – were integrally connected to its nature and mission, rather than simply pedagogically so within the divine economy. And yet it was Nevin and Hodge who carried on a discernable ecclesial outward tradition, with Campbell leaning heavily on the faithful improvisation of the wider community to create an adaptable and legitimate ecclesial polity. In other words, Campbell, Hodge, and Nevin each shared something vital while also offering their own idiosyncrasies. There is no single thing that can be said in general about all three theologians when broadly referencing the structure and authority of the Church, except perhaps their agreement that much of the ecclesial options on offer (Catholic and many Protestant) in the antebellum age were wrong.\textsuperscript{593} This is the point of building toward a typology, as we clearly have three uniquely discernable ecclesiological visions from these three thinkers, rooted in unique hermeneutics and teleologies that manifest themselves in disparate polities.

Campbell, rooted in the belief that the contemporary Church could best discern its own cultural context, advocated for a covenant cooperation of local churches: an independent-interdependence of the community of communities. For the Bethany reformer, there was a mix of Scriptural precedence and expediency that left no room for inherited tradition. The unity and collaboration of these local communities, biblically and pragmatically arranged, was premised on an underlying evangelical mission of the conversion of the world to Christ. The way the Church manifest itself was orchestrated by the missional nature of the gospel it proclaimed. The structure and authority were not the mission themselves, but they were also not incidental or purely functional to the Church’s existence.

\textsuperscript{593} Although there seem to be no positive precepts that all three agree on, they are unanimous in rejecting certain ecclesial manifestations such as Ultramontanism or Mormonism.
Hodge shared many of Campbell’s predilections for organization, the levelling of the clergy, and the dislike of episcopal diocesan arrangement. His sharp ontological distinction between the *invisible* and *visible* church, however, resulted in the outward organization being relegated to a functional role of protecting right teaching and personal piety. His treatment of the sacraments evinced this most clearly as he felt they primarily existed to communicate doctrine and enhance the individual’s faith. This pronounced dualism between the material and spiritual underscored his already individualistic theology, leaving the Church to be nothing more than the collection of individuals who held correct teaching and experienced a personal conversion.\footnote{Presbyterianism itself was not prescriptive for Hodge. It happened to not trespass on his more fundamental ecclesiological beliefs; and furthermore, there seemed to be no other ecclesial option available, in his view, that avoided the errors of revivalistic independency and high church ritualism, but that was not a divinely ordained system.}

Nevin was unrelenting in his insistence on the divine ontology of the Church. And while the Mercersburg theologian held to his own version of the *visible-invisible* Church (*ideal-actual*), he emphasized their fundamental unity rather than their ontological distinction. The combination of the divine ontology of the Church and the unity of the *ideal* and *actual* left a paradox that both raised up the organization and authority of the external ecclesial structure to a divine level while also all but ignoring most specifics. Nevin evaded an expediency that proclaimed the organization of the Church *adiaphorous*, while also avoiding a formal polity for fear of being categorized with what he felt were wooden *jure divino* positions, insisting that the dynamic nature of the *ideal* Church forbade such universalism. Though in theory Nevin raised the significance of the external structure of the Church to a matter of salvation, the most tangible thing it translated to was his voluminous writing on the sacraments and ministerial office (including the Revised Liturgy). In the end, Nevin’s proposed structure and authority of the
Church ruled out more than it endorsed, forcing the Church to constantly discern a theological 
fitness in order to provide a constructive polity.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has aimed at engaging three concrete realities that informed and shaped Campbell’s, Hodge’s, and Nevin’s ecclesiology. Starting with the Bible, we examined the primary source of evangelical theology; moving to the millennial fervor that occupied so much theologizing of the antebellum period, we explored the impact of each theologian’s eschatological vision as a formative piece of their ecclesiology; and finally, we have unpacked their practical configuration of the polity and structure of the Church. Collectively these sections have provided a contextual entrance into the ecclesiological exploration of these theologians.

The historical rootedness of the first chapter will be vital as we move to the second chapter, which is of a more abstract nature. The first chapter has attempted to clear away much of the strangeness that comes from exploring the past while also teasing out aspects of each thinker’s ecclesiology that will be used as building blocks for the formal typology. Those building blocks will be expanded, clarified, and added to in the following chapter on the way to the typology in chapter 3. Chapter 2 will engage more classic ecclesiological discussions: an examination of the theological constitution of the Church and its visible and invisible nature.
Chapter 2

Section 1

The July Bible Riots and the Nation’s Birth

The fourth of July celebrations in America’s second largest city were usually a significant event.\(^{595}\) However, the disruptive May riots of 1844 promised to inject the yearly pomp and circumstance with even more regalia, charged especially with nationalistic zeal. The *Public Ledger* newspaper described the scene of a massive parade and picnic in the city, referring to it as the “Anniversary of Independence,” and noting that in the grandeur of the day’s events “there was observable quite a difference” from past years.\(^{596}\) The tension of the day was also noted by the *Public Ledger*. Regrettably the paper’s relief was expressed too hastily:

> On account of the dreadful scenes which the city has lately passed through, and the exacerbated feeling existing between parties, it was feared by some that on the fourth of July, when the great demonstration of the Native Americans was to be made that the flames of discord might again be rekindled. But fortunately the day passed off with moral serenity matching its physical aspects.\(^{597}\)

The celebration marking the anniversary of the nation was a memory trigger of the founding principles that impelled such an Independence Day. The 1844 Philadelphia “Anniversary of Independence” is an example of how certain aspects of a founding narrative can be ramped up or even manipulated to tell an unbalanced story of the nation itself.\(^{598}\) When

\(^{595}\) Although Philadelphia began the 19th century as the second largest city (population-wise) in the nation, it fell to third (behind Chicago) by the 20th century. Before 1854 the city was left unconsolidated, and therefore during most of the 30s, 40s, and 50s it fluctuated anywhere between the second to the fourth largest in the nation behind Baltimore, New Orleans, and Boston. After the Act of Consolidation in 1854, the city jumped back to second in population with more than a half-million citizens — a quarter of a million less than New York, but double the next closest city in American: Brooklyn. Philadelphia truly was America’s “second city” through the 19th century. See https://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0027/tab03.txt

\(^{596}\) “The Celebration of the Fourth of July,” *Public Ledger*, July 6, 1844. The article even noted that the “most remarkable display” in the parade was from the “Native American party.”

\(^{597}\) Ibid.

\(^{598}\) There is a significant amount of scholarship in the social sciences on “etiological myths” that function in just such a way. Most of the research by anthropologists or sociologists is religious in nature, as connections between myth and ritual are explored. See Bruce Lincoln, *Discourse and the Construction of Society: Comparative Studies of Myth, Ritual, and Classification* (New York: OUP, 1992).
Protestant parade-goers used the “martyrs” of the May Riots and the imagery of the open Bible in tandem with (or sometimes artistically wrapped up by) nationalistic symbols like the flag, the eagle, and the goddess Columbia, they were clearly suggesting that they were the true progeny of the founding vision for the county.\textsuperscript{599} If the symbology was not explicit enough, banners were inscribed with: “Our Fathers Gave Us the Bible – We Will Not Yield It To A Foreign Land.”\textsuperscript{600} By pointing back to the “foundation” of the country and those symbols representing it, the citizens of Philadelphia could reconstruct the nature of the nation in a nativist manner that excluded the likes of Roman Catholic immigrants.

The Independence Day parade – the annual celebration of the “founding” of the nation – was the perfect venue to put on full display the symbols representing their national etiological myth.\textsuperscript{601} Philadelphian Catholics knew the potential for mania that such nationalism was capable of and they prepared for the worst by stocking at least one Southwark-area church with guns and ammunition.\textsuperscript{602} Rumors spread of the armament of the St. Philip de Neri Church, and by the afternoon of July 5th there was a mob surrounding the building demanding it be searched.\textsuperscript{603} Over the next three days, St. Philip de Neri Church was the site of a stand-off that flared into violence

\textsuperscript{599} The imagery was not only on the banners and floats in the parade, but printed on pamphlets and distributed verses around the Independence Day celebrations: Oxx, The Nativist Movement in America, 70.
\textsuperscript{600} Lannie and Diethorn, “For the Honor and Glory of God,” 82. Another of the most repeated mottoes of the banners was “Our Country and Our Open Bible,” which had the obvious illocutionary force of stating that Catholics were both un-American and against the free reading of the Bible. Other mottoes included “God and Our Country,” “The Bible is our Guide,” “The Light of the World and the Guide of the Nations,” “The Bible is the Basis of Education and the Safeguard of Liberty,” among numerous others (ibid).
\textsuperscript{601} There is significant scholarly discussion over the exact relationship between “myth” and “ritual.” It may seem quite linear, as the “ritual” of Independence Day necessarily (historically) followed the etiological “myth” of American becoming a self-governing country. However, my point here gives credence to a blurring of the causal lines: the rituals of Independence Day, such as parades, can alter the myth itself, as it seems to have done with a specific anti-Catholic message that was not present in the earlier iterations of the etiological myth of the nation.
\textsuperscript{602} The motivation for this armament is unclear. Most have noted the Catholics were taking precautionary measures because of the national celebrations (threats had been made), but Feldberg insists that the arsenal was being “returned” to the Church after repairs: Feldberg, The Philadelphia Riots of 1844, 139. This account actually seems more likely, as the cargo arrived on the morning of July 5th, which would make little sense as a “precaution” for Independence Day.
\textsuperscript{603} Lannie and Diethorn, “For the Honor and Glory of God,” 83. Already by the evening of the 5th there were purported to be over a thousand outside the Church.
numerous times between various groups protecting the Church (Sheriff, Colonel, Military Troops, local militia, Hibernia Greens) and those set on its destruction. Arson attempts were made on the Church and a canon did significant damage to the exterior, but St. Philip’s never succumbed to the utter devastation of St. Michael’s and St. Augustine’s. The clashes between the mob and the defendants, however, proved just as lethal as the May Riots with more than a dozen dead and at least 50 wounded. What started as a parade celebrating the anniversary of the founding of the nation turned into a three-day reminder that in Philadelphia in 1844, Catholicism and Catholics were commonly branded as anti-American and abused as such.

The nativist thrust of the Bible Riots was central to the reaction of Campbell who, more than three hundred miles away in Bethany, wrote,

The Philadelphia riots develope [sic] so much Romanism as pertains to the faith of the word of a Priest when his loyalty to the Pope and the church is concerned. The details or the search of the St. Philip De [sic] Neri Church, in Southwark, Philadelphia, is a most literal verification of the [treason] allegations against popish faith in the controversy with Bishop Purcell. The Report of the Committee of Nineteen is a lesson to every Protestant and non-committal man in the New World on the duplicity and deceitfulness of the spirit of that system. The burning of our Bible in New York, and the trampling under foot [sic] the flag of our country, are indications of hatred against both, that I did not expect to transpire in this our day and country.

The “fusion of evangelical Protestantism and American nationalism” was a lethal recipe for Roman Catholicism in the mid-19th century. This mixture congealed in the 40s and 50s, eventually manifesting itself as the nativist Know-Nothing movement and the so-named political

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604 For a lengthy description of the July disruption around St. Philip de Neri, see Feldberg, *The Turbulent Era*, 24–32.
606 Campbell, “Philadelphia Riots.” Campbell’s mixing of religious and political issues is indiscriminate and underscores the entanglement of the concerns. His reference to New York concerns the flare-ups that were immediately put down by Bishop Hughes and the mayor elect (who happened to be a staunch nativist) James Harper. Princeton was home to the “Committee on the Romish Church, Public Morals and Infidelity.” It is not known whether Hodge was directly involved in this committee, and very little is known about the nature or scope of their work. Still, its existence and socio-cultural title suggests there was a similar national and religious intermingling to much of the surrounding Protestantism.
party. This is the kind of nativism that Wolffe has called a “constitutional-national anti-Catholicism” because it focused on the alien nature of Catholicism to the founding principles of the country. For some European nations (including England) this “constitutional-national anti-Catholicism” was rooted in the pre-existing Protestant state church; whereas for America, it was the insistence upon a separation of Church and State and the necessarily pluralistic religious landscape, at least within the limited parameters of Protestant Christianity. The foreign force, in this case Catholics, needed to be repelled as their system was deemed incompatible with the nation’s constitution. Constitutional-national anti-Catholicism looks to the founding of the nation in order to answer the question, “What is the nature of our nation?” Once it has been established that Catholicism is a foreign element to that founding nature, then it is rejected out of hand. The constitution of the Church acts in a similar way for theologians who seek to understand its nature. In other words, there can be a “constitutional-ecclesial anti-Catholicism” inherent within certain forms of evangelical faith too. This is not a political nativism, but a form of theological nativism that seeks to find the true whatness of the Church to invalidate those who are not a part of that founding narrative. These different points of emphasis on the formation of the Church helped shape and define the nature of the Church itself. At the root of these different aspects of emphasis was the economy of the Son and the Spirit as it related to the Church.

The Christological and Pneumatological Constitution of the Church

The 19th-century American context was replete with Christian thinkers who struggled to make sense of the mixed legacy of Trinitarian theology bequeathed by eighteenth-century

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608 The Know-Nothing Party was officially founded in 1844, but did not see its major successes on a national scale until the 1850s. The Party’s extreme nativism and anti-Catholicism resulted in “Bloody Monday,” where 22 civilians were killed and many more injured as Catholics and Know-Nothings clashed over the gubernatorial election. Even the name of the unofficial constitution of the Know-Nothing Party intermingles the political and ecclesial aspects of their mission: Thomas R. Whitney, A Defence of the American Policy, as Opposed to the Encroachments of Foreign Influence, and Especially to the Interference of the Papacy in the Political Interests and Affairs of the United States (New York: De Witt & Davenport, 1856).

For several newer groups, such as the Boston Unitarians and many Christian Connexion groups, this led to overtly anti-trinitarian positions; nevertheless, the trio of Campbell, Hodge, and Nevin remained largely traditional in their theology of God. Chapter 2 will begin with an examination of the Trinitarian foundation of the Church as found in each of the three theologians surveyed. Whether the three 19th-century thinkers would admit it or not, they all leaned heavily toward a foundation for the Church that was generated by a particular configuration of Trinitarian activity. This section will outline how what may seem like minor differences in theological emphasis in the outworking of their trinitarianism as it pertained to their ecclesiology, actually resulted in three markedly distinct trajectories. In other words, the unique explication of the Christological and pneumatological constitution of the Church by Hodge, Campbell, and Nevin, laid the foundation for much of the ecclesiological elaboration that followed. Admittedly, the idea of trying to isolate and, in some measure, pit the activity and authority of one member of the Godhead against another is problematic from inception.

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611 Despite Campbell’s repeated dismissal of extra-biblical language, he regularly defended a qualified but traditional view of the Trinity. Humbert notes that “Campbell falls back on a formula very similar to the orthodox statement of Chalcedon (A.D. 451).” However, there are notable deviations as Campbell strongly dismissed the eternal generation of the Son, using only “the Word” as a proper name for the second person of the Trinity before the incarnation. Campbell’s Trinitarian position was clarified and put to the test upon the merger of his Disciples with Stone’s Christians, as the latter’s doctrine of the Trinity was significantly more deficient and has been labelled by Carter as “quasi-Arianism.” Campbell and Humbert, A Compend of Alexander Campbell’s Theology, 267n3; Carter, “The Trinity in the Stone-Campbell Movement,” 2012, 49–101. Cf. Campbell, “Millennium,” 700; Campbell, “Unitarianism as Connected with Christian Union,” The Millennial Harbinger, III, III (1846): 636.

612 The theological or ecclesiological payoff, so to speak, of the examination of the constitutive element of the Church comes most directly in the following section on the Visible and Invisible nature of the Church. It also clearly introduces one of the most important distinctions between the three theologians: their understanding of history in relation to soteriology and ecclesiology.
three theologians in question likely would never have condoned parsing the activity of the persons of the Trinity *ad extra* to better understand their own ecclesiological differences.\(^{613}\)

At its heart, this section is about probing the question “What is the Church” before attempting an exploration of “Where is the Church” or even “Who,” “Why,” or “How?” \(^{614}\) Asking the prior question was particularly important in antebellum America during the Second Great Awakening. Revivalism had impacted all three theologians to varying degrees and in different ways, and although all three were decidedly opposed to the extremes of revivalism, they were impacted by the interdenominationalism that sought, either explicitly or implicitly, to question traditional teaching on *what* the Church was. \(^{615}\)

**Hodge**

Hodge, in his Commentary on Ephesians, insisted that the root of the Church was the body of Jesus Christ. “This is the radical, or formative idea of the church,” insisted Hodge in the first chapter of the Commentary. “From this idea are to be developed its nature, its attributes, and

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\(^{613}\) I would contest that Campbell, Hodge, and Nevin would all insist (though perhaps not in such explicit terms) that rather than (over?) emphasizing one person of the Trinity as the foundation of the Church, we should recognize a cooperative Trinitarian foundation of the Church by relying on a classic theological formula such as *omnia opera trinitatis ad extra indivisa sunt*. Davis notes that this formula is “everywhere attributed to [Augustine], but is not locatable in his extant writings”; however, as Cary notes, the theme is prevalent and undergirds his entire work of *De Trinitate* enough to be accurately referred to as “Augustine’s Rule.” Stephen T. Davis, *Christian Philosophical Theology* (OUP, 2006), 71; Phillip Cary, “On Behalf of Classical Trinitarianism: A Critique of Rahner on the Trinity,” *Thomist: A Speculative Quarterly Review* 56, no. 3 (July 1, 1992): 368.

\(^{614}\) Nevin insists that the “What” question must necessarily be broached before the others can be attempted: Nevin, “Thoughts on the Church,” 190. Whether or not it is possible to abstractly ask the “What” question without the more immediate question of “Where” or “Who” is not entirely clear. However, breaking the first two sections of chapter 2 down in this way affords at least a conceptual framework to access the significant differences among the theologians.

its prerogatives.” The focus of Hodge’s ecclesiology, it would seem, was to emerge from and be formed by his Christology. However, this declaration was no sooner made by Hodge than he began to nuance, qualify, and redirect the exact meaning of this Christological ecclesiology. This section on Hodge’s understanding of the constitutive elements of the Church will show that despite his repeated insistence upon Christ being the Head of the Church, his ecclesiology was almost entirely premised on a particular pneumatological foundation.

In the concluding section of his dissertation on the ecclesiology of Charles Hodge, J.J. Deifell claims that the main defect that he finds in the Princetonian’s theology of the Church can be attributed to the fact that his “theology was not Christocentric.” This seems odd since Hodge was almost incessantly writing and talking about Christ and His benefits. After all, Hodge was firmly planted in the Westminster tradition, known as Covenantal or Federal Theology. Within this tradition, salvation history was marked by two representative figures: Adam and Christ. The first, as a type of the latter, represented the carnal nature of fallen humanity under the

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618 Evans, *Impartation and Impartation*, 187–227. See also Helseth, “Right Reason” and the Princeton Mind, xxv-xxvi n11; Mark A. Noll, “Charles Hodge as an Expositor of the Spiritual Life,” in *Charles Hodge Revisited: A Critical Appraisal of His Life and Work*, ed. John W. Stewart and James H. Moorhead (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), 200ff. Helseth and Noll helpfully note how the philosophy of the day – Scottish Common Sense Realism – modified Hodge’s Federal Theology, especially through the introduction of “moral intuition.” Most notably this was made clear in Hodge’s explication of the connection between the Head and representatives in the covenantal relationship. Rather than Adam’s sin being imputed to his posterity both naturally and forensically, as Calvin had upheld in the Augustinian tradition, Hodge all but drops the former and ends up emphasizing the latter by default. The result is the same with the Second Adam: Christ’s righteousness is forensically imputed to the believer in a “legal and not a moral sense” (Helseth, xxvi n11). His reasoning was not based on biblical evidence, but on his view that humans do not experience moral change through natural means. That is, the “moral intuition” of Common Sense Realism gave Hodge license to lean on his own “experience” (or the introspective interpretation of his experience) over and against other epistemological authorities (specifically the Bible). Hodge saw no evidence that sin or righteousness were imputed naturally, so he concluded it must only be a forensic exchange. As Noll concludes, in this specific instance, “Hodge mostly gave up the Bible for common sense” (Noll, 202). This dismissal of the natural transaction, in turn, undergirded Hodge’s dualistic separation of the natural and the spiritual more broadly. Hodge insisted that the religion of the Bible and the apostolic Church is not one of materiality, but that “There everything is spiritual”; Hodge, *The Church and Its Polity*, 53. For a more in-depth examination of Hodge’s covenantal theology in relation to other Reformed American theologians, see George P. Hutchinson, *The Problem of Original Sin in American Presbyterian Theology*, 2nd edition (Toccoa, GA: Sola Fide Publishers, 2014), 29ff.
curse of sin and death, the corrupted state from which humankind could not unshackle itself. The latter, the antitype, represented the great reversal where justification was pronounced and righteousness imputed through the gracious action of the new Adam, Jesus Christ. The prominence of Romans 5 (especially v. 12-21) within this framework is unmistakable. In fact, Romans 5 became a lens for reading other parts of Scripture for Hodge, and nowhere was that more evident than his Commentary on Ephesians. In the first chapter of the letter, Hodge could not miss the connection between Romans 5 and verses 22-23 where the author writes, “And he has put all things under his feet and has made [Christ] the head over all things for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.” Ephesians 1 seemed tailor-made to support the federal framework built from Romans 5. The headship of Christ was of primary importance to this theological framework; yet, as one explores Hodge’s writings, it becomes increasingly clear that Christ’s Headship dominated his soteriological understanding, while it was only given lip-service within his ecclesiology.619

The first and perhaps most telling way this divorce between soteriology and ecclesiology is evinced is in how Hodge concluded his interpretation of Ephesians 1:22-23. Unlike Nevin, who also used this passage to undergird his ecclesiology, Hodge did not read “the fullness of him who fills all in all” as the Church being the fullness of Christ, but instead as Christ the head filling the Church with his Spirit. It was not Christ – as the Head – who was actually filling the Church, and here was where Hodge read the Spirit into the passage: “It is the indwelling of the Spirit of Christ, that constitutes the church his body. And, therefore, those only in whom the

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619 Holifield, in a comparison of Hodge and Nevin’s ecclesiology, lends support to this point: “Nevin and Hodge were not divided over mere questions of polity and organization; their conflict was deeper… Whereas Nevin’s ecclesiology was based on his Christology, Hodge’s doctrine of the Church rested on soteriology”: Holifield, “Mercersburg, Princeton, and the South,” 249.
Spirit dwells are constituent members of the true church.” The pneumatological shift in emphasis was not simply a move beyond or away from the Christological explanation, but it also brought into relief the anthropocentrism of Hodge’s ecclesial vision.

Hodge’s interpretation of this key passage in Ephesians accomplished two things within his theological project. First, it protected the asymmetry and irreversibility within the Christ-Church relationship. The Church in no way completed Christ; rather, Christ was a figurehead of the Church with no material connection to its consociation. The federal relationship between Christ and the one saved was forensic or judicial, as it declared the sinner to be righteous, but it in no way shared an imparted righteousness. Second, Hodge’s ecclesiology emphasized the spiritual nature of the Church as the body enlivened by the Spirit of Christ, despite the head being materially detached. Thus, Hodge avoided the need to articulate how the humanity of the incarnate Christ “fills” the Body which is His Church.

The risk for Hodge in this biblical exegesis was that he ended up advocating for a theological dualism where the Church appeared to manifest itself as something like a decapitated ghost: a body enlivened by the Spirit with a Head that is all but severed from its host. This risk appeared to be a conscious and worthwhile one for Hodge, who was more concerned about the theological consequences of what his interpretation avoided: a substantial or material exchange.

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620 Hodge, A Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians, 87.
621 Aubert’s study of Hodge and Gerhart is very helpful in disentangling the finer points of this distinction between the two soteriological schemas: Aubert, The German Roots of Nineteenth-Century American Theology.
622 This is, in many ways, what was at the root of the debate between Hodge and Nevin surrounding the Lord’s Supper. For primary sources on this, see Nevin, The Mystical Presence; Hodge, “Review: The Mystical Presence.” For more recent secondary treatments of the debate, see Linden J. DeBie and W. Bradford Littlejohn, “Reformed Eucharistic Theology and the Case for Real Presence,” Theology Today 71, no. 4 (January 1, 2015): 429–39; Nevin and Hodge, Coena Mystica; Borneman, Church, Sacrament, and American Democracy; Littlejohn, The Mercersburg Theology and the Quest for Reformed Catholicity; Arie J. Griffioen, “Nevin on the Lord’s Supper,” in Reformed Confessionalism in Nineteenth-Century America: Essays on the Thought of John Williamson Nevin, ed. Sam Hamstra and Arie J. Griffioen (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press; American Theological Library Association, 1995).
623 Deifell puts it this way, “It seems however that for Hodge the Church is the Body of the Spirit attached to its Head”: Deifell, “The Ecclesiology of Charles Hodge,” 392.
of divinity and humanity between Christ and his Body, which potentially travelled in both
directions. His primary concern was to avoid any theological configuration in which the Church
was made to be “filling” Christ, for this would imply that without the Church, Christ was
somehow lacking or deficient.624

**Hodge’s Spiritual Body**

One of Hodge’s favourite axioms, used often as a quick riposte to his “ritualist”
detractors, was a reworking of an Irenaeus quote from *Against Heresies*.625 While Irenaeus
wrote, “*Ubi enim Ecclesia, ibi et Spiritus Dei; ubi Spiritus Dei, illic Ecclesia et omnis gratia:*
*Spiritus autem veritas*” (III.24.1), Hodge chose to restate only the middle affirmation, “*Ubi
Spiritus Dei, ibi ecclesia,***” claiming that it was the banner of the early evangelical fathers which
“now waves over all evangelical Christendom.”626 Hodge’s selective repurposing of Irenaeus
was deliberate. While the Bishop of Lyon was joining the Spirit and the Church together in a
reciprocal relationship so that they could not be pulled asunder by false teachers, Hodge utilized
the Holy Spirit as the material condition of the Church: *if* Spirit *then* Church (Spirit → Church).
The implication was that the logic could not be reversed in Hodge’s construction as it was in

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624 Deifell sees this risk and claims that while Hodge avoids it, Nevin cannot. His evidence for Nevin’s
principle of “ontological reversibility” is the “Intro” to Schaff’s *Principle of Protestantism*: Ibid., 143.
625 Hodge’s catchy description of those “ritualists” was “Popes and Prelatists, Patriarchs and Priests”: Hodge, “Presbyterianism (1860),” 120. It is interesting that both Hodge and Campbell have “4 Ps” of anti-
evangelical Christianity, with three being the same; but where Hodge lists Priests, Campbell identifies Presbyteries
(obviously not something Hodge could agree with): Campbell, “Reply to Query,” *The Millennial Harbinger*, V, I,
no. IV (April 1858): 517–18.
626 Hodge, “Presbyterianism (1860),” 120; Hodge, “Theories of the Church (1846),” 52. For “*Ubi Spiritus Sanctus ibi Ecclesia*” see Hodge, “Principles of Church Union (1865),” in *The Church and Its Polity*, ed. Durant and
translated the Irenaeus quote in full: “Where the Church is, there is also the Spirit of God; and where the spirit of
God is, there is the Church and all grace: the Spirit is truth”: https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/audiences/1979/documents/hf_jp-ii_aud_19790530.html (accessed May 16, 2016). It is no surprise that Hodge
makes no mention of another patristic formulation by Ignatius: ὅσπερ ὁπου ἀν ἷ Χριστὸς Ἰησοῦς, ἐκεὶ ἅ καθολικὴ
eκκλησία: Ignatius, “Epistle of Ignatius to the Smyrnaeans,” ca 110AD, Ch. 8. It is noteworthy that in a recent book
promoting an evangelical ecclesiology, the quote is latinized and the καθολικὴ is omitted, despite it being the
earliest known usage: *Ubi Christus, ibi ecclesia*. Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the
Trinity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 136. It is surprising that like Hodge, as far as I can find, Nevin makes
no use of the Ignatian christological formulation either. The surrounding references to the presence of an επίσκοπος
(bishop) may be the reason he avoided the reference. Nevin does reference the letter, but only chapter 7, not chapter
Irenaeus. After all, claimed Hodge, “the Spirit makes the Church, as the soul makes the man” and “where the soul is, there the body is.” However, if there was a body without a soul it would be “a lifeless corpse… a dead man.”

The spiritualized body of Hodge’s Church will be discussed at greater length and in more detail in the following section on the Visible and Invisible Church. It must be noted how influential this idea was for Hodge on the democratization and individualization of the Church. The pneumatological priority of the Church was not, in Hodge’s case, a Spirit-filled structure, but was a collection of Spirit-filled individuals. “The Spirit does not dwell,” railed Hodge, “in church officers, nor especially in prelates, as such… but in true believers, who therefore constitute that church which is the body of Christ.”

Hodge was proud to stand with Tertullian, pronouncing, “Ubi tres sunt, etiamsi laici, ibi ecclesia est.” All that the true Church required

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627 The logic of this material condition is premised on the assumption by Hodge that the opposite construction (Church → Spirit) refers to the visible Church. Hodge would, hypothetically at least, be comfortable with the formulation “True Church → Spirit”, if the “True Church” was explicitly equated with the invisible (Spiritual) Church, thus creating a tautology.

Another consequence of Hodge employing this dictum has to do with him answering a what question with a where answer. We know what the Church is by identifying where the Church is (the Church is where the Spirit indwells believers). This brings to the fore the issue of whether questions of ecclesial nature are largely subterfuges for the more fundamental act of pointing to who or where the Church is. This question of where or who will be delayed until the next section, but it must be noted here that it seems to lurk in the background of every discussion of what the Church is.

628 Hodge, “Presbyterianism (1860),” 120. Hodge’s clearest summary statement comes a page later: “[Where] it was stated that the indwelling of the Spirit constitutes the Church, so that where the Spirit is, there the Church is” (121).

629 It is not surprising that Hatch has only one reference to Hodge in his seminal work: Hatch, The Democratization of American Christianity. On the surface Hodge seemed to dismiss so much of what Hatch focuses on: revivalism, new religious movements, and even full gender and racial egalitarianism. Furthermore, Hatch was right to brand him as one calling the Church back to “doctrinal rigor and confessional roots” (196). However, this was only one aspect of Hodge’s ecclesiology (admittedly a vital one). What Hatch missed, or at least what goes unmentioned in his book, is the role Hodge’s specific doctrinal understanding of the Church played in legitimating a democratization among staid, orderly mainline evangelicals within existing traditional denominational frameworks. Hodge and company at Princeton may not have been as radical as the New Haven New Schoolers, but they worked much more subversively, and arguably more effectively, at undermining the traditional theology of the Presbyterian structure, while maintaining the outward order.

630 Hodge, A Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians, 87–88.

631 “Where there are three, even if they are [only] faithful laypeople, there the church is”: Hodge, The Church and Its Polity. The quote is likely reworked from the original: Sed ubi tres, ecclesia est, licet laici (Where there are three, there is the Church, notwithstanding they be laypersons): Tertullian, “On Exhortation to Chastity,” ca 204AD, Ch. 7.3.
was “sincere believers” who had a “similar spiritual union with Christ,” a collection of individuals – even as few as three – with “the same Spirit dwelling in each.” The Spirit worked internally, invisibly, individually, and immediately in Hodge’s theology, creating a pneumatological foundation for the Church that prioritized the individual and found no value in the Church structures per se. The Spirit “organized, animated and controlled” the Church.

**Churchianity vs. Christianity**

As alluded to above, part of Hodge’s consternation around issues of ecclesiology was that he envisioned a necessary divide between the Church and salvation. Ecclesiology and soteriology were related only in the most tangential manner. The Church was simply the collective result from the individual paths of salvation which was the heart of the Christian faith. As Kelsey puts it: “The sociality of covenant communities [ie. the Church] is a function of God’s judicial decision and is extrinsic to our created natures. Hodge was a metaphysical individualist, and so is the Holy Spirit.” This all followed directly from Hodge’s modification of Irenaeus’ dictum, which he expanded further: “Where these fruits of the Spirit are, there, and not elsewhere, is the Spirit; and where the Spirit is, there is union with Christ; and where union with Christ is, there is membership in his body, which is the Church.” The image of salvation might be represented by an electric fan, with Christ being the motor that turns the blades, the Spirit being the wind that is generated, and each individual person being a streamer tied onto the cage of the fan, which is the Church. The believer is moved by the Spirit through the benefits of Christ, the “source of its life,” but is tied individually to the cage of the fan, the frame or body of

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633 Hodge, “Presbyterianism (1860),” 119.
634 Kelsey, “Charles Hodge as Interpreter of Scripture,” 244. It would probably be more exact to say that Hodge was a nominalist who always prioritized the individual over the universal, but Kelsey’s gist is on point. See Evans, *Imputation and Impartation*, 201; Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999), 42ff.
No streamer is directly tied to the motor of the fan, but experiences union through the breeze that is generated by that motor – the streamers happen to move in the same direction through the working of the Spirit. “The essential bond of union between the saints, that which gives rise to their communion, and makes them the Church or body of Christ,” claimed Hodge, is not that they are “in Christ” corporately, but that “the indwelling of the Holy Ghost” in each of the saints individually affords them a common bond under which to gather together as the Church. The Church is a common society, not a corporate reality. Hodge’s various references to the Church as a “band of witnesses,” a “coetus sanctorum,” and a “coetus cultorum Dei” captures that distinction well by grounding itself in the federal theological imagery of a covenant between members.

Making the Church an ingredient in the theology of salvation was “Churchianity,” according to Hodge, while in Christianity, “The individual believer gets his life by immediate union with Christ, and not through the Church.” The constant worry was that the Church would be made “so prominent that Christ and the truth [were] eclipsed.” There was an irony in

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636 Hodge, A Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians, 87.
637 Deifell noted that Hodge preferred the word common rather than corporate with reference to the Church because it denoted that the benefits of Christ were “experienced similarly by each and all the saints,” while not connoting that the benefits somehow belonged to the communion itself. Deifell, “The Ecclesiology of Charles Hodge,” 50n2.
638 Here the term “corporate” is intended to connote the coordination and integration of a unified body, as in the Latin corpus. It is not, conversely, used in its legal definition as “of or shared by all the members of a group,” which is much closer to “common.”
639 Hodge, “Presbyterianism (1860),” 120.
641 Hodge, “Church Officers (1846),” in The Church and Its Polity, 245.
642 Later in his career, Hodge takes up the catchy title of “band of brethren” for a short form of the Church. See for instance Hodge, “The Unity of the Church Based on Personal Union with Christ,” in History, Essays, Orations, and Other Documents of the Sixth General Conference of the Evangelical Alliance Held in New York, October 2-12, 1873, by Philip Schaff and Samuel Irenus Prime (Ann Arbor, MI: Making of America, 2000), 142.
643 This is a term he borrows from “Dr. [Samuel] Parr,” who used it against the “ritualist” school of the Tractarians: Hodge, “Theories of the Church (1846),” 48.
644 Hodge, “History of the Apostolic Church,” 49.
645 Hodge, The Church and Its Polity, 48.
this theological concern, however. Though Hodge fretted over the eclipse of “Christ and the truth” by Churchianity, he claimed this was happening through an enlarged rather than diminished construal of Christ within the ordo salutis. More specifically, an ecclesiological predicament like Churchianity was only conceivable in a soteriological system that was predicated on the continuation of the incarnation – the extension of the theanthropic person of Christ – in and through the visible, historical church. Hodge was concerned, and here is the irony, that Christ would be obscured by a Church that was an extended embodiment of Christ himself. Here Deifell’s accusation about Hodge’s lack of Christocentrism begins to come into focus. For even during the antebellum period, Nevin accused Hodge’s Christ of being “a Nestorian Christ; in whose constitution, the new creation becomes at best, after the similitude of Peter’s vision, a great sheet-like vessel, knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth, only to be received up again soon after into heaven.” Again, later in an 1850 article, though Nevin does not mention Hodge by name, the connection is clear as he rails against rationalists who held to an “avatar” Christ and maintained that they were proclaiming evangelical Christianity.

Hodge’s thin Christology, according to Nevin, resulted in a view of humanity as a “vast sand heap” (a pile of individual grains of sand) where the Church is constituted by a “fiat” of the Holy Spirit. This divine decree introduced a new creation into the world that lacked communality, belonging only “in an immediate and exclusive way, to each single believer for himself.” As Deifell summarizes it, “Hodge seemed to regard church societies as formed by the static

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646 Hodge, “History of the Apostolic Church.” This will be explored much more in depth with Nevin below.
647 Nevin and Hodge, Coena Mystica, 2:173. Throughout their back-and-forth, Nevin and Hodge regularly accuse each other of Christological heresy. Nevin’s most common accusations against Hodge are Nestorianism and Sabellianism, while Hodge branded Nevin a Eutychian.
649 Ibid., 2, 7.
accumulation of Christians in a temporary group whereby they harmoniously cultivate their own religious nature and dutifully teach God’s doctrinal truths.”

Hodge was not, however, without ammunition in his counter-attacks on Nevin and the so-called ritualists. He perceptibly saw the direction that Churchianity could lead. Ultimately, for Hodge, if the Church’s “supernatural power” is gained by virtue of being a “continuation of the incarnation,” then it imbues the officers, sacraments, and structures with an “objective efficiency,” something his pneumatological conception of the Church deemed untenable. His response was to look to the cross first, as the source of the benefits of Christ gained by the individual saint. The theological logic comes full circle to Romans 5:

For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more surely, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life. But more than that, we even boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation (v. 10-11).

Those reconciled were also those in whom the Spirit dwelt, and when they gathered together as the Scriptures claimed the Lord had implored them to do, therein lay the Church, argued Hodge. Evident within this construal is not only the individualization of this pneumatological Church, but perhaps even more fundamentally, the anthropocentricism of the Church. The Church was for Hodge the collection of spirit-filled members.

Nevin

The ecclesiologically rich passage of Ephesians 1 was also central to Nevin’s theology, though in a very different way than Hodge’s. After leaving Princeton, the Mercersburg theologian had progressively shed some of the educational particularity acquired under

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651 Hodge, “History of the Apostolic Church.”
652 It is not surprising that in his “Commentary” on verse 11, Hodge makes the direct connection to Ephesians 1:22 and the headship of Christ. See Hodge, A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, 218.
Archibald Alexander, Samuel Miller, and Charles Hodge. Of primary importance to this theological change in direction was the rejection of what he viewed as an untenable dualism imposed upon the gospel. One way this dualism was manifest was in a sharp material-spiritual divide that was evident in Hodge’s pneumatological ecclesiology outlined above. While Hodge fretted over keeping the humanity of Christ separate from the Spirit-constituted Church, careful not to blur or conflate the two natures of Christ, Nevin, by the mid-40s, increasingly emphasized the unity of the two natures in one person. Thus, Nevin preferred to talk about the *life* of Christ being bestowed onto the Church rather than the “Spirit of Christ” as Hodge had. “Christ’s life” wrote Nevin, alluding to Ephesians 1, “rests not in his separate person, but passes over to his people; thus constituting the CHURCH, which is his body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all.” He was quick to dismiss any “pantheistic dissipation” of Christ’s divinity into the “general consciousness of the intelligent universe,” yet he maintained:

> Just as little does it imply any like dissipation of Christ’s personality into the general consciousness of the Church, when we affirm that it forms the ground, out of which and in the power of which only, the whole life of the Church continually subsists. In this view Christ is personally present always in the Church. This of course, in the power of his divine nature. But his divine nature is at the same time *human*, in the fullest sense; and wherever his presence is revealed in the Church in a real way, it includes his person necessarily under the one aspect as well as under the other."

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655 This, of course, is what left him open to the charge of Eutychianism made by Hodge at various times through the 40s and 50s.


657 Ibid., 173–74.
Hodge’s accusation that Nevin’s theology implied that Christ’s humanity (alone!) constitutes the Church was understandable considering the Princetonian’s theological apprehensions. Nevertheless, the indictment was clearly only a half-truth when Nevin’s words are considered.658

**New Creation and the Church**

The key image used by Nevin in describing the connection between Christ and the Church was that the Church was an “extension” of the “new creation.”659 This new creation was wrought not only with the coming of the Holy Spirit, nor even with the death and resurrection of the Christ, but with the very incarnation itself: “The mystery of the incarnation involves in itself potentially a new order of existence for the world.”660 With the Logos ensarkos a new creation entered the earthly realm that did not pass away with the ascension of Christ, but was extended temporally through the continuation of His body, the Church.661 “As such a fact,” Nevin

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658 Hodge, “Review of Christian Life and Doctrine by W. Cunningham.”
659 Nevin, _The Mystical Presence_, 222.
660 Nevin, “Catholicism,” 19.
661 Here it is interesting to note that Hodge and Nevin never formally, as far as this author knows, engaged in a debate over the _extra calvinisticum_. With all the Christological heresy-hunting on both sides – and all the Eucharistic debating – there was not a Christological exchange over whether the finite humanity of Christ was capable of “receiving or grasping infinite attributes.” It is surprising simply because it seems to be at the root of much of their Christological differences, yet it goes unidentified. For a general description of the doctrine of the _extra calvinisticum_, see Richard A. Muller, _Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms: Drawn Principally from Protestant Scholastic Theology_ (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1996), 111. Although it is true, as McGinnis notes, that the “nineteenth century saw an extensive realization and solidification” of the 18th-century movement away from “traditional Christologies” in service of downplaying difference for “church unity” (best exemplified in the Prussian union of churches (1817)), Hodge and Nevin were notable exceptions (135). McGinnis assigns Hodge to his “counterfources” movement as a Reformed thinker who staunchly maintained his anti-Lutheran Christological bias or, to put it positively, his affirmation of the _extra calvinisticum_ (141-43). Nevin, not explicitly mentioned by McGinnis, was more influenced by the continental discussions (and attempts at Protestant rapprochement) than Hodge and clearly was sympathetic to a more Lutheran-leaning emphasis on the _communicatio idiomatum_, where the attributes of both the divine and human natures of Christ were shared fully. It is likely that Nevin followed Isaak Dorner, whom he references often and speaks highly of, in trying to find a “dialectical affirmation” that satisfied both Reformed and Lutheran theologians (138-39). See Andrew M. McGinnis, _The Son of God Beyond the Flesh: A Historical and Theological Study of the Extra Calvinisticum_ (London; New York: Bloomsbury, 2014).

Aubert notes that Emanuel Vogel Gerhart, a former student of Nevin who is known for “systematizing Mercersburg theology,” never dismissed the _extra calvinisticum_ in favour of a more Lutheran stress on the _communicatio idiomatum_, despite following much more closely Nevin’s theology than Hodge’s: Aubert, _The German Roots of Nineteenth-Century American Theology_, 145–46. One reason this is so surprising is the tension both outside and inside the German Reformed Church, felt by Nevin and Schaff because of their liberal use of German Lutheran sources. This has also spilled over into the contemporary historiography of the scholars in debating how Reformed they truly were (Nevin particularly), as many of their theological sources were Lutherans. The debate does give insight into Hodge’s anxiety toward Nevin’s talk of the _humanity_ of Christ being joined with...
contended, again drawn back to the Ephesians 1 passage, the incarnation “includes life-powers which were not in the world before, but cannot be sundered from its history since. These life-powers belong to its very constitution, and as such are lodged in the Church, which is the ‘body of Christ, the fullness of him that filleth all in all.’”

While Hodge qualified his covenantal imagery by ensuring that the “natural” relationship between Adam-and-his-progeny and Christ-and-his-Church was downplayed in favour of their “moral” connection, Nevin made the natural connection even more substantial by borrowing what he called a “beautiful image” from Hooker of the Church as Eve, formed from the very side of Christ: “a true native extract out of Christ’s body.” Using the Gospel of John, and the letters of Paul especially, Nevin could simply not hold to the strict formality of the representational relationship of the covenantal heads of Adam and Christ that Hodge espoused. In an article

the divinity of Christ in a continuation of the incarnation through the Church. For instance, Nevin’s reprinting of Heinrich Schmid’s “The Person of Christ” in the very first issue of the MR was strong evidence of sympathy, if not support, for a robust doctrine of the communicatio idiomatum. Not to mention that the Lutheran translator, Krauth – like the Anglican Muhlenberg – was strongly influenced by Nevin in leading his church in an “evangelical catholic” direction that became known as Neo-Lutheranism: Heinrich Schmid, “The Person of Christ,” trans. Charles Porterfield Krauth, The Mercersburg Review 1 (1849): 272–306. For an even more direct example in the same volume, see Nevin, “The Lutheran Confession,” The Mercersburg Review 1, no. 1 (1849): 468–77. This article is an introduction for The Evangelical Review, which was a new Lutheran Quarterly that aligned closely with the Mercersburg School. Nevin’s own take on his Lutheranism, at least at the end of the 40s, is as follows: “We believe, indeed, that Lutheranism and Reform, the two great phases of the Protestant faith, may be so brought together with mutual inward modification, that neither shall necessarily exclude the other, that each rather shall serve to make the other more perfect and complete; and we earnestly long for this union; but so long as the antithesis, which, in itself, thus far, has been real and not imaginary only, is not advanced to this inward solution and reconciliation, we are in principle Reformed, and not Lutheran” (470). For Nevin’s evolving relationship with Lutherans through his lifetime, see Reeves, “Countering Revivalism and Revitalizing Protestantism,” 196–213.

Nevin does speak of the communicatio idiomatum twice in direct reference to its place in the Heidelberg Catechism, but he does not offer extended commentary. Nor does he tip his hand to his own thinking beyond affirming that he felt it was equally a Reformed doctrine and a Lutheran one: Nevin, The Mystical Presence, 85; Nevin, History and Genius of the Heidelberg Catechism (Chambersburg, PA: Publication Office of the German Reformed Church, 1847), 42. Holifield also provides an excellent window into the debate. However, within his narrative, Hodge and Nevin are supporting cast to the real main characters, Dabney and Adger, who play relatively the same theological roles in the South at the same time. See Holifield, The Gentlemen Theologians: American Theology in Southern Culture 1795 - 1860 (Wipf & Stock, 2007), 175ff.

662 Nevin, “The Church,” 71. For one of the most explicit connections Nevin makes between the incarnation and the constitution of the Church, see Nevin, “Letter to Dr. Henry Harbaugh.” Not surprisingly, Nevin’s final line of the letter is “the fulness of him that filleth all in all.”

663 Nevin, The Mystical Presence, 232. Nevin does not cite Hooker but seems to have taken the quotation from the Fifth Book: Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity, 56.7. See also Nevin, The Anxious Bench, 129–30.
where he argued for real union with Christ over and against only the image of Christ being impressed upon believers, Nevin wrote at great length of what it meant biblically to be “in Christ.” His conclusion was that it would be foreign to speak of the “patriots of the American Revolution, as being in George Washington,” just as it was unfitting to use “in Christ” when only an immaterial, moral representational role was reserved for Adam and Christ.\textsuperscript{664} For the Church to be “in Christ” according to Nevin, it meant that Christ was the “foundation of the Church; it [started] in his person,” and its historical unfolding was the revelation of the “full force of the mystery” of the incarnation.\textsuperscript{665} Not merely the benefits of Christ were ingredient to the constitution of the Church, but Christ’s very own person. In an accusation that could well have been directed toward Hodge, Nevin maintained that it was only “sectarian, schismatic Christianity” that tended to “make Christ’s actual person of small account, as compared with his doctrine and work.”\textsuperscript{666}

The advent of the incarnation introduced a new creation, a new reality into the cosmos, a revelation of “the grace and truth which came by him in the beginning.”\textsuperscript{667} Yet nothing was lost to humanity when Christ ascended in the flesh. As the “fullness of him that filleth all in all,” Christ was the beginning and the end, the “alpha and omega,” the head of the Church; but in a very real sense, Christ was not made whole until He was given a body.\textsuperscript{668} And so “Christ himself [was] made perfect in the Church” to such a degree that Nevin was comfortable claiming, “There can be no church without Christ, but we may reverse the proposition also and say, no Church, no

\textsuperscript{665} Ibid., 10. In \textit{The Mystical Presence}, Nevin bolsters this Pauline understanding of being “in Christ” using his preferred gospel, John, and the image of the vine and branches in chapter 15. See Nevin, \textit{The Mystical Presence}, 229.
\textsuperscript{666} Nevin, \textit{Antichrist}, 49.
\textsuperscript{667} Nevin, “The Church,” 59.
\textsuperscript{668} Ibid.
Christ.”\textsuperscript{669} Quite simply, Nevin appeared unconcerned with maintaining the sharp asymmetry between Christ and the Church that Hodge so anxiously fretted about.\textsuperscript{670} In reality, he exchanged Hodge’s equation (Christ > Church) for his own (Christ = Church), writing, straightforwardly, “The Church is the historical continuation of the life of Jesus Christ in the world.”\textsuperscript{671} It was this “new order of existence which was introduced into the world by his incarnation” that remained the Church’s “perennial undying root.”\textsuperscript{672} Holifield sums up Nevin’s position well:

Nevin understood the Church as a visible, life-bearing, supernatural constitution, rooted in the person of Christ, and as much an object of faith as any other central Christian doctrine. Since Jesus Christ was the theanthropic Redeemer, the Church, as the ‘form of his continual presence in the world,’ was a divine-human, visible but supernatural, bearer of redemptive grace. The Church was the extension of the Incarnation, the Body of Christ.\textsuperscript{673}

\textsuperscript{669} Ibid., 66. To my knowledge, Deifell is the only secondary source to deal in passing (though he does not explicitly site it) with this ecclesiological idea of Nevin’s. It is either theologically unorthodox or confusing in its explication (or both) – neither option invites engagement from most scholars interested in re-sourcing Nevin. First, it seems to be an intractable outcome of his understanding of the development of history. Though there is no indication that Nevin would have considered Christ “imperfect” prior to the constitution of the Church, there is a distinct idea of the perfecting nature of the development through time. This is providential development in Nevin’s view: this is the growing and progressing way God is going about redeeming the world. Yet, despite the argument that this idea was integral to Nevin’s understanding of historical development, the actual argument itself is abstracted from history and made on logical grounds. That is, Christ and the Church are not two separate entities, but two ways of speaking about one thing.

\textsuperscript{670} He never directly used Augustine’s understanding of the totus Christus, but there are obvious echoes of in Nevin’s work. For a helpful introduction to Augustine’s ecclesiological usage of totus Christus, see Kimberly Baker, “Augustine’s Doctrine of the Totus Christus: Reflecting on the Church as Sacrament of Unity,” Horizons 37, no. 1 (March 2010): 7–24. It is worthwhile to note that while Augustine formulated his understanding of the whole Christ through the Pauline imagery of the “Body of Christ,” like Nevin, it was actually Augustine’s reflection on the “speaker” of the Psalms that pushed him to a more radical direction (11-12). This is certainly not to claim that Augustine’s understanding of the totus Christus was explicated in the same manner as Nevin’s extension of Christ in the Church. In fact, amid proposing his understanding of the totus Christus, Augustine takes great pains to avoid the kind of statement that Nevin makes about Christ “being made perfect in the Church.” Augustine writes, “For indeed head and body form one Christ [totus Christus]. Not that he isn’t complete without the body, but that he was prepared to be complete and entire together with us too, though even without us he is always complete and entire, not only insofar as his is the Word, the only-begotten Son equal to the Father.” Augustine, Sermons (341-400) on Various Subjects, trans. Edmund Hill, The Works of Saint Augustine (New City Press, 1996), 26 (341.11).


\textsuperscript{672} Nevin, “Hodge on Ephesians: Second Article,” 211.

\textsuperscript{673} Holifield, “Mercersburg, Princeton, and the South,” 249. For a similar summation, see Gilpin, “The Doctrine of the Church in the Thought of Alexander Campbell and John W. Nevin,” 424.
A Pneumatological Christology

The Church as an historical extension of the incarnation, however, did not mean the Spirit was absent from Nevin’s ecclesiology.674 Far from it, he contended that it is always the Spirit that “constitutes the form of Christ’s presence and activity in the Church, and the medium by which he communicates himself to his people.”675 The Spirit was the co-bearer of supernatural life within the Church, not “abstracted from the presence of Christ himself, as though [Christ] were the fountain only, and not the very life-stream too,”676 but as if the “vitality of the body [descended] into it from the head.”677

Introducing the Spirit into a fundamentally Christological ecclesiology had two integrally related purposes for Nevin. These purposes will be explored later regarding the visibility of the Church, but will be briefly outlined here in service to the question “What is the Church.” Of primary importance to this aspect of Nevin’s ecclesiology was his understanding of the Spirit as the “form” of the divine constitution of the Church. The somewhat abstruse English word “form” was employed technically by Nevin, borrowed from platonic philosophy.678 He used it, ironically enough, to counteract the pneumatological ecclesiology of the revivalism era – one that Hodge had imbibed and then largely espoused, despite his denunciation of the revivals’ excesses.679 The difference in pneumatological emphasis between much of the revivalist ecclesiology and Nevin’s

674 DeBie makes a similar argument to the following section in his dissertation, but instead of a discussion of the Church, he makes it in a discussion of the Eucharist. DeBie, “German Idealism in Protestant Orthodoxy: The Mercersburg Movement, 1840-1860,” 263.
676 Ibid., 75.
was that in the former the Spirit indwelt individual believers who then consequently happened to gather together into a collective called the Church. This pneumatological ecclesiology was only ever a “corporation accredited by outward seal.” On the other hand, in Nevin’s ecclesiological framework, the Spirit drew the outline of the body into which the life of Christ was imparted. The Spirit enlivened a traced-but-immaterial body – the ideal body of Christ – within which the actual Church subsisted and individuals could belong through mutually indwelling Christ, by the power of the same Spirit.

The idea of “form” as it related to the pneumatological aspect of the Church’s foundation greatly impacted Nevin’s explication of the ecclesial attribute of catholicity, having to do fundamentally with the relationship between the universal and particular. A case in point was Nevin’s opening paragraph in his work *Human Freedom*:

> All created life exists under two aspects, and includes in itself what may be denominated a two-fold form of being. In one view, it is something individual and single, the particular revelation as such, by which, in any given case, it makes itself known in the actual world. In another view, it is a general, universal force, which lies back of all such revelation, and communicated to this its true significance and power. In this form, it is an idea; not an abstraction or notion simply, fabricated by the understanding, to represent its own sense of a certain common character, belonging to a multitude of individual objects; but the inmost substantial nature of these objects themselves, which goes before them, in the order of existence, at least, if not in time, and finds its perpetual manifestation through their endlessly diversified forms. All life is at once ideal and actual, and in this respect, at once single and universal. It belongs to the very nature of the idea, (as a true subsistence and not a mere notion,) to be without parts and without limits.

The Spirit traced the ideal Church “without parts and without limits” that preceded the actual Church, which was reified in “endlessly diversified forms.” The Holy Spirit ensured the Church’s wholeness or its catholicity by providing a foundation not based in Spirit-dwelt

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680 For an excellent overview of revivalism and antebellum alternatives (including Nevin), see Reeves, “Countering Revivalism and Revitalizing Protestantism,” especially 1-23.
682 Nevin’s particular understanding of the ideal and actual will be explored in greater depth in the following section. For a secondary overview, see Littlejohn, “Sectarianism and the Search for Visible Catholicity.”
individuals, but in the eternal procession (spiration) of the Spirit from the Father and Son.\textsuperscript{685} The Spirit outlines the \textit{ideal} body of Christ and then intervenes in its \textit{actualization}, not in order to be a crude stopgap between Christ and members of his body, but to bring them together more intimately “than if [Christ] were still outwardly in the midst of [the Church] as in the days of his flesh.”\textsuperscript{686} It is, in sum, through the “power of the Holy Ghost” in the life of the Church that “Christ, the organic root of the Church” is joined to its members, thereby making visible the Church’s preexisting wholeness or catholicity.\textsuperscript{687}

\textbf{The Church and Salvation}

Nevin could not have envisaged a perception of the Christian faith that separated soteriology and ecclesiology in any significant manner. He had no concern that something like “Churchianity” would, or even could, pervert Christianity because in his estimation the Church belonged to the “essence” of Christianity. The Church was not “something accidental” to Christianity’s “proper being,” and any attempted separation would induce “serious damage to its life.”\textsuperscript{688} Indeed, Nevin claims that “the Church Question,” which he described as the proper first principles of ecclesiology (or the \textit{What} question), is constitutive of Christianity itself, exercising a “moulding influence, and conditioning power, over the whole structure of the Christian faith.”\textsuperscript{689} The substantial connection between Christ, the Holy Spirit, and the Church is well established by this point, but the result of Nevin’s configuration needs further articulation.

\textsuperscript{685} Nevin, \textit{The Mystical Presence}, 223.
\textsuperscript{686} Ibid., 229.
\textsuperscript{687} Nevin, \textit{The Anxious Bench}, 125.
\textsuperscript{688} Nevin, “Thoughts on the Church,” 191, 193.
\textsuperscript{689} Ibid., 174. Later in the article Nevin proposes the alternative view, sounding eerily like Hodge: “Let the answer, on the contrary, fall the other way, so that the Church shall be held to be no necessary constituent of Christianity, but only an arrangement joined to it from without, and it becomes then just as easy to see, how at once all points connected with it must be shorn, to a corresponding extent, of their meaning and interest, and how it can never be any thing [sic] more than pedantry at best to lay any great stress upon them, or to make them the subject of earnest strife one way or another”: Ibid., 189.
The logical end to which Nevin’s supernatural constitution of the Church led was as an object of faith. Nevin wrote, “What is the Church” could be answered according to Nevin by simply saying it is the “key, the only key, that unlocks the hidden mystery of the world.” Nevin wrote, “There can be no surer mark of a poor theology than this; that it has no earnest sympathy with the idea of the Church, as a divine historical reality grounded in the constitution of Christ’s person.” Proper ecclesiological first principles were so vital that to exchange the rock of Christ for a sandy foundation was to endanger the entire enterprise of faith seeking understanding. What the Church was, in the end for Nevin, was both the Christological and pneumatological foundation of its nature, but also the vehicle of salvation for all humankind. Nevin’s own words provide a fitting summation, as he demanded that good theology – Churchly Christianity – had always maintained that the Church was “the body of Christ, and the home of the Spirit,” and because of which Christians have properly

ascribed to it for this reason heavenly prerogatives and powers; and found no difficulty accordingly in speaking of it as the ark of salvation, in whose bosom alone men might hope to outride safely the perils of their present life, and to be borne finally into the heaven of eternal rest.

Campbell

The covenantal heritage of Westminster that was taken up, at least in part, by Nevin and Hodge was not altogether absent from Campbell, though he could scarcely be called a traditional proponent of federal theology. Nevertheless, the idea of the Headship of Christ still had a vital

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690 Nevin, Antichrist, 85.
691 Ibid., 67.
692 Ibid., 67–68n.
693 Nevin, “Thoughts on the Church,” 195. For his take on Mercersburg’s prominence in promoting “Churchly Christianity,” see Nevin, “The Letters of John W. Nevin to William R. Whittingham,” ed. David Hein, Anglican and Episcopal History 60, no. 2 (1991): 207-08. He claims that “we have been doing more than any other part of the American Protestant Church in these days, to enforce the claims of Christological or churchly Christianity.”
694 Richardson, The Role of Grace in the Thought of Alexander Campbell, 12ff. However, Gilpin’s connection cannot be overlooked. He writes, “The image of the church as a constitutional monarchy stood in the tradition of covenant theology, which asserted that the order of human history, indeed of the entire cosmos, was
place within Campbell’s ecclesiology. In truth, the centrality of the Headship of Christ was so crucial for Campbell that it became the simple confession that he insisted was required from believers.695 In his debate on Baptism with Nathan Rice, the Presbyterian clergyman, Campbell trumpeted his liberality by pronouncing, “Let them think as they like on any matters of human opinion and upon ‘doctrines of religion’ provided only they hold The Head Christ and keep his commandments.”696

**Christocracy**

This title of “head” was not merely a biblical term that Campbell fancied, but it formed the crux of his ecclesiological foundation. The headship of Christ was not an eternal designation, suspended upon the unfailing promises of the sovereign God”: Gilpin, “The Integrity of the Church: The Communal Theology of Disciples of Christ,” 34. Gilpin’s point is strengthened, in my opinion, by the fact that a heavier reliance on Federal Theology in Campbell also makes sense of his deliberate organization of his only work that resembles a systematic theology, *The Christian System*. Why else would a theologian who largely dismisses natural theology begin his work with an exploration of “The Universe” and then only subsequently turn to “The Bible,” except to show the enduring promises and faithfulness of the covenant-making God who is far beyond his creation? Added to this theological rationale was Campbell’s *rationality*, which also sought order and intelligibility within the Church and the cosmos.

695 Campbell regularly fell back upon the simple Petrine confession (“You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God” [Matt. 16:16]) as the “foundation” of the Church, as opposed to Peter’s “person.” Or he used Paul’s dictum: “Other foundations can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus the Christ” [1 Cor. 3:11]. However, when he was pushed on how far this “simple confession” could be extended, he certainly had limits. A case in point was the 1845 proposal of union made by the Pennsylvania Christian Conference (Connexion) to Unitarians (who accepted), Winebrennarians (who apparently ignored the offer), and Disciples (who rejected it on grounds of an inadequate Christology and Trinitarianism). During his extended exchange with the Connexion itinerant J.J. Harvey, Campbell used the phrase that would be oft repeated in the rhetoric of both 19th- and 20th-century Disciples: “union in truth” (690). The motivation to coin this phrase is crucial to seeing that there was a more robust Trinitarian theology undergirding Campbell’s missiologically motivated ecclesiology than most historians have seen. “Truth,” in this case, represented orthodox Christology that was opposed to Unitarianism. See Campbell, “Union Among Christians,” *The Millennial Harbinger*, III, III (1846): 216–25; Campbell, “Unitarianism as Connected with Christian Union”; Campbell, “Unitarianism, Or, Remarks on Christian Union,” *The Millennial Harbinger*, III, III (1846): 388–94; Campbell, “Christian Union,” *The Millennial Harbinger*, III, III (1846): 686–98. For the enduring reach of the maxim “Unity in Truth” in the development of the Stone-Campbell Movement, see James B. North, *Union in Truth: An Interpretive History of the Restoration Movement* (Cincinnati, OH: Standard, 1994).

696 Campbell and Rice, *A Debate between Rev. A. Campbell and Rev. N. L. Rice*, 797. As one of Campbell’s last debates (5 of 6), it drew much attention. Henry Clay was the chairman of the debate (Clay and Campbell were fond acquaintances) and even Charles Hodge reviewed the published exchange in the *BRPR*: Hodge, “A Debate Between Rev. A. Campbell and Rev. N. L. Rice, on the Action, Subject, Design and Administrator of Christian Baptism.” For an overview of the debate, see Humble, *Campbell and Controversy*, 185–225. Campbell had requested Robert Jefferson Breckinridge to be the debate partner, which would have ensured an even larger event due to Breckinridge’s fame in the state, but the younger Presbyterian politely declined, alluding to Campbell’s previous debates, writing, “No, sir, I will never be Alexander Campbell’s opponent… A man who has done what he has to defend Christianity against infidelity, to defend Protestantism against the delusions and usurpations of Catholicism, I will never oppose in public debate. I esteem him too highly” (188).
according to Campbell, but was bestowed upon the Son “after his ascension from earth to heaven… there duly inaugurated, and all authority in heaven and earth vested in his hands.”

This was the “coronation of the reigning Sovereign of the true celestial empire,” and the ascension was the crowning of the King of the “mediatorial economy.” And this is why, decried Campbell,

“There is no end, no terminus to church and State democracies, aristocracies, monarchies, oligarchies, theocracies, but not one word, not even in Webster’s Dictionary – of a christocracy, and yet, in very deed, this is the only liege designation title, or name, of the present government of the universe; and especially that of the Christian Church.

A christocracy, according to Campbell, was the “superlative” government of the dispensation of “remedial grace,” ensuring that Jesus was properly understood to be the “Divine Saviour” who was the “head of the Christian Institution,” the “Lord, legislator, the King eternal, and the ultimate judge of the universe. For Campbell, an ecclesial christocracy meant simply this:

“The head of the body is the glory of the man. The head of the mystical, or emblematical body of Christ, is the glorified Redeemer.” Still, the head was not merely representational for the body, rather it was the “person, the mission, the character and the work” of Christ that formed the very nature and purpose of the whole body. The ruler of the christocracy, in other words, represented and embodied the Church.

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698 Ibid.
699 Ibid., 490.
700 Campbell, “Christology. Christocracy,” *The Millennial Harbinger*, V, IV (1861): 462–65. In typical Campbell fashion, his consistency was not a priority. The entire article is an apology for the thorough “study of Christology” because of its essentiality to the christocracy of the Church. In the very next issue of the *MH*, however, he dismisses the term “Christology” as unbiblical and one of the “pure speculative abstractions of human reason or imagination”: Campbell, “The Primary Facts of Christianity,” *The Millennial Harbinger*, V, IV (1861): 561. I am indebted to Lindley for pointing this particular contradiction out: Lindley, *Apostle of Freedom*, 81.
701 Ibid., 465.
702 Ibid., 464.
Yet the body of Christ was not, for Campbell, an extension of the earthly material body of Jesus, as Nevin had maintained. In fact, he expressed the technical “contradistinction” between the mystical body of Christ and the “literal and natural body” of Christ.  

“Over this spiritual body,” meaning the Church, continued Campbell, Christ is “the Head, the King, Lord, and Lawgiver, and they are severally members of his body, and under his direction.” This meant that the church, as a “peculiar community,” had identifiable “laws, ordinances, manners, and customs of its own” which were “derived from the Saviour” directly, constituting the “congregation or church of the Lord.” More than anything else, the christocratic character of the congregation of Christ cemented two things for Campbell: first, the divine constitution of the Church as being “founded on the thing confessed,” and second, following from the first, the “essential unity” of the Church apart from its individual members. The second of these results was, in large measure, a recapitulation of his father’s great contribution to Stone-Campbell ecclesiology in the Declaration and Address. It was, nonetheless, premised by the younger Campbell not simply on his father’s work, but on the “seven articles” or “pillars” from the letter to the Ephesians (4:4-6): “One body, one spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father of all.” This was the “indestructible basis” of the Church, because each pillar was divinely given, unified in the triune God for humanity’s “spiritual and eternal salvation in the full enjoyment of himself, his Creator, his Redeemer, and the whole universe of spiritual

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704 Ibid. He repeats this title for Christ on 78-79 as well.
705 Ibid.
707 Thomas Campbell famously wrote, in what is perhaps the most well-known phrase in all of Stone-Campbell history, “That the Church of Christ upon earth is essentially, intentionally, and constitutionally one”: Thomas Campbell, *Declaration and Address of the Christian Association of Washington*, Centennial Edition (Pittsburgh, PA: Centennial Bureau, 1908), 16.
intelligence through all the circles and cycles of an infinite, and everlasting future of being and blessedness."\textsuperscript{709} The unity of the Church was given in Christ and his redeeming activity, just as it was founded on Christ as the head of the body.

\textbf{Holy Guest}

There was another aspect of this christocracy that formed the structural framework of Campbell’s ecclesiology and that was the role of the Spirit. In a significant way, Campbell’s pneumatology was predicated upon his ecclesiology, not unlike Nevin’s.\textsuperscript{710} Contra Hodge, the Spirit did not form the Church by bringing together those individuals it indwelt, but the Church was established upon Christ’s ascension and the Spirit subsequently dwelt among that christocratic institution called the Church.\textsuperscript{711} The Church mediated the Spirit to the (baptized) individuals, rather than individuals receiving the Spirit in an immediate manner. Campbell preferred – and at points insisted – that the Spirit be referred to as the “Holy Guest,” rather than Holy Ghost, because its entire role in the mediatorial economy was consumed by being the “Guest of the house that Jesus built for a habitation of God through the Spirit.”\textsuperscript{712} The Holy Spirit as the Guest of the Church is what supplied the “recreative, renovating, [and] regenerating” power of the “Christian temple – the mystic house of God” for those who chose to

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\textsuperscript{709} Ibid., 558.


\textsuperscript{711} He is not always entirely consistent in explicating the unfolding of the ecclesial economy, but the most common refrain keeps closely to the following: “[The] Holy Spirit, who, on the formation of the Church of Christ, became its Holy Guest”: Campbell, Popular Lectures and Addresses, 167. Cf. Campbell, “The True and False Jesus of the Reformation, in Faith and Manners, Plead in the Nineteenth Century,” 489. In this latter article Campbell speaks of the Church being “instituted on… Pentecost after [Christ’s] ascension,” but even here he speaks of its foundation “in and through [God’s] only begotten and well beloved Son.” Earlier, Campbell emphasized the Spirit’s indwelling the Church at Pentecost as its formal beginning: “we, who date the Christian Institution from the fiftieth day after the resurrection of the Messiah, from the first Pentecost after the Crucifixion”: Campbell, “Letter to James H. Otey, Bishop of Tennessee - I,” 230–31.

\textsuperscript{712} Campbell, Popular Lectures and Addresses, 624. Campbell writes, “Jehovah, in the person of the Father, and as the God of Abraham, was the head of the Jewish Institution. And Jehovah, in the person of the Son, is the head of the Christian Institution. And Jehovah, in the person of the Holy Spirit, is the guest – not the Ghost of it”: Campbell, “Christology. Christocracy,” 462.
The Church, for Campbell, was a divine kingdom, ruled by Christ and inhabited by the Spirit, who “animates, purifies and comforts it with all his illuminating, renovating and sanctifying efficacy.”

In trying to explain exactly how the Spirit and the Son coordinated, Campbell often reverted to Nevin’s preferred title for the Church in order to illustrate that the Spirit was the vitalizing breath of the body of Christ. Or, if he did attempt a more limned edificial picture of the Church as a temple or tabernacle, he usually ended up mixing metaphors by claiming that within the new structure, Christ was its head and the Spirit its heart (or life). Campbell’s basic conception was that once Christ ascended and “founded” the Church, He sent the Spirit as the permanent divine presence – the “sacred guest” – through which the gospel in word and deed was communicated and lived out. The descended Spirit at Pentecost had bound together the King and His citizens “as a single living reality, the body of Christ, the church,” as Gilpin

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713 Campbell, *Popular Lectures and Addresses*, 587. Here too, Campbell repeats the description of the Church as the “habitation of God through the Spirit.” He also reiterates here the indistinguishability of the activity of the Father, Son, and Spirit ad extra. For his reticence to fully separate the actions of the Son and the Spirit in the Christocratic kingdom, see Campbell, “Letters to England,” 425.


717 Lindley overstates this (verging on modalism), but his point is still valid in certain measure: “Disciples of Christ have been accused of not believing in the Holy Spirit, but here is the ultimate of faith in the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is Christ alive now in his church. As Holy Spirit, Christ returned on Pentecost, and he saves us today by receiving us into the fellowship of his body”: Lindley, “The Structure of the Church,” 190. Toulouse’s description of how Campbell understood the divine presence within the Church as “God with us” is probably more measured and theologically attuned to Campbell’s theological rationality: Toulouse, “Campbell and Postmillennialism: The Kingdoms of God,” 78.
summarizes the christocratic proposal of Campbell. The Holy Spirit played an integral role beyond simply internally binding members and Christ together, for this “spiritual temple,” which was “animated and adorned with the graces, the beauty, and the grandeur of the Holy Spirit,” was intended to be “the light of the world” for the “salvation to the ends of the earth.” The Holy Guest, in other words, ensured the ecclesial unity of the christocracy in order to facilitate the missiological motivation for the Church’s existence.

**Divine Constitution for Human Mission**

Finally, it is imperative to capture just how enmeshed the *nature* and the *mission* of the Church was for the Sage of Bethany. The Church was, by nature, the “habitation of God on earth” through the Headship of Christ and the indwelling of the Spirit. But again, in a noticeably different theological schema than either Hodge or Nevin, Campbell understood the Church, *in se*, as the vehicle “fully adequate to the conversion of the whole world.”

Gilpin notes that the twofold constitution of the Church as Christ’s kingdom and the Spirit’s habitation was collectively “intended to direct the attention of the Church beyond itself, toward the kingdom of which it was the ‘millennial harbinger’ and toward the world in which the spirit was to bear witness.” This is true, but mutes the weightier theological rationale in Campbell’s own

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719 Campbell, “Bible Terminology,” 124. Campbell was also not shy to claim that we do not know the entire scope or role that the Spirit has in this economy. He is, despite his rational tendencies, enough of a Scripturalist/Biblicist to realize that there is significant mystery to the Spirit’s being and activity: Campbell, *Popular Lectures and Addresses*, 624.
720 Campbell, *The Christian System*, 184–85. It is distinct from Hodge for reasons outlined above: the fact that Hodge is shy to speak of “the Church” as being or doing anything beyond what its Spirit-indwelt believers were or did. For Campbell’s heavy insistence on the corporate nature of the Church, particularly in a highly revivalistic context, see Gilpin, “The Integrity of the Church: The Communal Theology of Disciples of Christ,” 33. The difference here with Nevin is more complex, but primarily revolves on the difference in human agency that the two theologians held. While for Nevin the divine activity of the Church through history often appeared to swallow the human participation, Campbell afforded more priority to the collective part that members of the Church were to play in the Trinitarian mission of the Church. For the importance of human agency in the nature and mission of the Church in Campbell’s theology, see Williams, “The Gospel as the Power of God to Salvation: Alexander Campbell and Experimental Religion,” 137.
arrangement, as it was the very Trinitarian nature that impelled the Church toward the world. The Church’s attention was not directed “beyond itself” purely as a witnessing institution, but its “missionary spirit” was “an emanation of the whole Godhead.”

Campbell unpacks it this way:

> God the Father sent his Son, his only-begotten Son, into our world. The Son sent the Holy Spirit to bear witness through his twelve missionaries, the consecrated and Heaven-inspired apostles… And need we ask, is not the Christian church itself, in its own institution and constitution, virtually and essentially a missionary institution?... No man can really or truthfully enjoy the spiritual, the soul-stirring, the heart-reviving honors and felicities of the Christian institution and kingdom, who does not intelligently, cordially and efficiently espouse the missionary cause.

This missionary-character of the church meant that it was not only expanding outward into the world, but also forward toward the eschaton, as we saw in chapter 1. Those who were received into the Church – through simple confession of Christ as the head and obedience to his commands (especially baptism) – were baked into one cake (to use Luther’s memorable phrase) with Christ, who is reconciling the world to Himself through the Church. Furthermore, it was the “inward unity of the spirit [that] propelled the church outward in mission,” notes Gilpin. There was, in Campbell’s vocabulary, a genuine “co-partnery” between the mission of Christ and the members of the Church. Driving home this aspect of the Church’s being, Campbell writes, “The Church, therefore, of right is, and ought to be, a great missionary society. Her parish is the whole earth, from sea to sea, and from the Euphrates to the last domicile of man.”

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723 Ibid. Campbell goes on to note that the “missionary” nature of the Church was both a desire to communicate to humankind’s “spiritual necessities as to his physical wants and infirmities.” The model was the “blessed and blissful Redeemer” who engaged those he encountered in “both the souls and the bodies… healing all that were, in body, soul or spirit, oppressed by Satan, the enemy of God and of man.”
724 Gilpin, “The Integrity of the Church: The Communal Theology of Disciples of Christ,” 36. It is unclear why Gilpin does not capitalize “spirit” here, as it is evident he is referring to the Holy Spirit.
725 Campbell, *The Christian System*, 100. Emphasizing the anti-revivalistic individualism of many antebellum evangelical ecclesiologies, Campbell expands his idea of “co-partnery” by noting that it “almost annihilated individuality itself, and inseparably cemented into one spirit all the genuine members of Christ’s body.”
726 Campbell, *Popular Lectures and Addresses*, 561.
according to Campbell, the Church was a dynamic unfolding of its constitution: the missional nature of the triune God.

**Summary**

Without making too much of the distinction, we cannot miss that Nevin, Hodge, and Campbell all emphasized different aspects of the divine economy on which to build their ecclesiology. For Nevin, it was clearly the *incarnation* of Christ which formed the base for the Church that would develop from his theanthropic personhood; Hodge, on the other hand, understood the *death and resurrection* of Christ (mostly his death!) as the source of divinely gracious benefits, under which banner the company of believers gathered together as the Church; and finally, Campbell looked to the *ascension* of the Lord as the inauguration of the christocracy and the hospitality of the Holy Guest into the koinonia of a missionary Church.

For Nevin this led to a figure of the Church as the ark of salvation in which all humanity was being reconciled in Christ’s very body as it was unfolding through the work of the Holy Spirit. The Church was, for Nevin, the pneumatic actualization of Christ’s *ideal* body, from the annunciation to the summing up of all things in glory. Hodge, on the other hand, envisioned the Church not as any *thing* in itself, but as an inspired collective or a cohort of endowed individuals who were gathered together under the headship of Christ. The Church, for Hodge, was the subsequent assembling of those believers who were saved and indwelt by the same Holy Spirit who worked immediately upon their hearts. Finally, Campbell viewed the Church as the grand missionary society for the evangelization and amelioration of the whole world. The expansive and expanding christocratic kingdom was ruled by the very thing it was founded upon, Christ Jesus, and the Spirit that He sent as its Guest. It was, in the end, the *sentness* of both the Son and the Spirit that became constitutive of the very institution they founded, making the Church ingredient to the missional character of the Triune God.
Section 2
The Aftermath of the Bible Riots: Whose Church, Which History

Taking stock of the Bible Riots was a sobering affair for a city so proud of its once-heralded reputation as the city of brotherly love. The reverberations were national as Americans reexamined their claims of religious liberty in light of the riotous events, and they “could not ignore such a profound contradiction between the ideal and the reality.”727 By the middle of July, the city was relatively settled, but had been unquestionably altered. Oxx notes that the riots precipitated major changes such as the initiation of the Catholic school system in Philadelphia, an influx of Catholic religious orders (the Sisters of Charity, the Ladies of the Sacred Heart, the Sisters of St. Joseph, the School Sisters of Notre Dame, the Visitation Sisters, Sisters of the Good Shepherd, and the LaSillian French Christian Brothers), and even a few Catholic-centred utopian societies were instigated in rural Pennsylvania.728 On the Protestant side, the riots served to multiply further the already existing plethora of voices, with some using the Riots as fodder for the canon of anti-Catholicism, while others were shocked into reevaluating their once certain anti-Catholic views.729

Among the clergy of Philadelphia, no single minister had incited more virulent anti-Catholicism leading up to the Bible Riots than Joseph F. Berg of Race Street Church.730 Berg

727 Oxx, The Nativist Movement in America, 74.
728 Ibid., 74–75.
729 Nativists fared well in the next several elections, anti-Catholic violence spread to other places, and religious segregation increased as rapidly as the flood-gates of European emigration opened. The riots also began a decade long discussion about the consolidation of Philadelphia County into one municipality because of the apparent lack in coherent law enforcement and fire stations. Ibid. Feldberg claims that overall the Southwark (July) riots served to strengthen Nativism: Feldberg, The Philadelphia Riots of 1844, 163.
730 The name of the church was officially First German Reformed Church of Philadelphia, but its location on Race Street became its regular moniker. Berg was born in Antigua to missionaries of the Moravian Church and eventually left the German Reformed Church for the more revivalistic-inclined Dutch Reformed Church. See David Van Horne, History of the Reformed Church in Philadelphia (Philadelphia, PA: Reformed Church Pub. Bd., 1876), 77. Robert Baird lists Berg with R.J. and John Breckinridge, Henry Boardman, and William Craig Brownlee as the “ablest writers on the subject” of Catholicism in America at the time of his writing in 1844 (just before the riots in Philadelphia). Baird, Religion in America; Or, An Account of the Origin, Relation to the State, and Present Condition of the Evangelical Churches in the United States. With Notices of the Unevangelical Denominations., 271.
was, according to Haden, “a rabid anti-Catholic German Reform clergyman, who was both a local and national anti-Catholic lecturer and writer.” Gerrity concludes that at the time of the Riots, Berg was “the city’s most prominent anti-Catholic.” While there is no explicit evidence that Berg’s hate-laced rhetoric was a direct cause of the violent riots, there is little doubt that his writing was part of the religious legitimization of abuse directed at Catholic institutions and even individual Catholics. Between 1840 and 1844, Berg published three significant works directed at exposing the “errors” of Roman Catholicism that were marked by their extreme bombast and their (often unverified) tales of woe from former Catholics. Berg also engaged in a public debate with a Catholic by the name of Nicholas Steinbacher. Despite Berg suspending his anti-Catholic semi-monthly magazine the Protestant Banner sometime following the riots, overall the violence seemed to have done little to dissuade Berg from his views. In fact, quite the opposite occurred as the German Reformed pastor continued to accost the public in the local Daily Sun paper, published by fellow pugilist Lewis Levin, even challenging Bishop Kenrick to a public debate in 1847, while also continuing to produce stand-alone works aimed at Catholic targets.

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734 Joseph Berg, Protestant Banner, 1842–44. The dates of the Protestant Banner are very unclear and there is some evidence that he may have been publishing still into 1845. Some of Berg’s better known pieces from the decade following the riots are: Joseph F. Berg and John Hughes, Answer to the Lecture of Archbishop Hughes, on the Decline of Protestantism (Philadelphia: Peterson, 1850); Joseph F. Berg, The Jesuits: A Lecture, Delivered Dec. 23, 1850, in the Musical Fund Hall (Philadelphia: Jones, 1851); Joseph F. Berg, Jehovah-Nissi: Farewell Words to the First German Reformed Church, Race Street, Philadelphia (Philadelphia: Lippincott, Grambo & Co., 1852). After moving over to the Dutch Reformed Church in New Jersey, Berg continued reflecting on the themes of the riots themselves, in light of Vatican I, by writing a 500-page work: Joseph F. Berg, The Open Bible: Or, The Hand
Perhaps the most interesting work Berg produced in the months following the riots – at least for the purposes of this introduction – was a sermon that was later expanded and published as *The Old Paths*. As the full title of the expanded work suggested, it was an apology for the Reformed Church, which he traced directly from the excommunicated and subsequently persecuted Waldensian (Waldenses) movement in central Europe, which had formed around Peter Waldo in the 12th century. Berg was adamant that the German Reformed Church did not emerge from medieval Catholicism through the efforts of the 16th-century Reformers, but that in fact the fledgling Protestants of the early modern period were reattaching themselves to the legitimate (*true*) Church that had endured in the Alps. The *true* Church was not invisible before the Reformation, but visible, existing as splinter proto-Protestant enclaves tucked away in the mountains of Europe. Considering the disorienting pandemonium of two sets of riots in the three-month span that surrounded him in Philadelphia, Berg used the 1844 Synod of the German Reformed Church to articulate an ecclesiological proposal that attempted to address the historical visibility and continuity of the Protestant Church. It was a response to the perennial question of Protestantism: “Where was the Church before Luther?”

Berg’s opening sermon of the Synod was likely not as alarming to most of the German Reformed clergy as the event which closed the proceedings: the inaugural address of

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735 Joseph F. Berg, *The Old Paths: Or, A Sketch of the Order and Discipline of the Reformed Church, before the Reformation, as Maintained by the Waldenses prior to That Epoch, and by the Church of the Palatinate, in the Sixteenth Century* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1845). The original sermon was published in the *Weekly Messenger* more than a month after it was preached: J. F. Berg, “A Sermon: Delivered at the Opening of the Synod of the German Reformed Church,” *Weekly Messenger*, November 20, 1844, 1.

736 Despite the 19th-century obsession with the movement known as the “Israel of the Alps,” there is a significant lacuna in contemporary academic scholarship of the Waldenses movement. Tourn’s work is still the standard, although his own involvement in the Waldensian Evangelical Church (before it merged with a branch of the Methodist Church) raises some questions: Giorgio Tourn, *You Are My Witnesses: The Waldensians across 800 Years*, ed. Frank G. Gibson (Torino: Claudiana, 1989). For a more recent study that is slightly more obscure in its scope, see R. D. Kernohan, *An Alliance across the Alps: Britain and Italy’s Waldensians* (Kincardine: Handsel Press, 2005).
Mercersburg’s newest faculty member, fresh from Berlin and John Williamson Nevin’s newest colleague, Philip Schaff. Having completed the business of the Synod, the members travelled from Allentown to Reading in order to hear Professor Schaff deliver an address titled The Principle of Protestantism. The work was a highly philosophical, historical defense of Protestantism as the proper manifestation of medieval Catholicism. It was, in other words, almost a completely contrary theological conclusion to Berg’s. Bricker and Thompson claim that “Against the backdrop of Berg’s sermon, the inaugural address of Philip Schaff is seen to be one of the most significant events in the history of the American church.”

The foil of Berg and Schaff is indeed illuminating of the Riots era and the ecclesiological reflection it invoked. However, there is another concurrent and largely untold story alongside the Berg-Schaff one that leads directly into this section. In 1840, shortly after arriving at Mercersburg from Pittsburgh, Nevin took the opportunity to review a book from one of the most prominent clergymen in his newly adopted denomination, Berg’s Lectures on Romanism. Nevin wrote:

Small as the volume is, it is large enough to drag some of the most hideous features of the Romish system into the broad light of day… The system must, by virtue of its own constitution, work for the subversion of our institutions, both civil and religious. Popery is at war with our government. It works also to undermine and sap the truth as it is in

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737 Schaff generally spelled his name “Schaf” upon first arriving, although there is evidence he used both. In the history of the 19th-century church, Schaff towers over both Nevin and Berg largely because of his efforts to edit the Ante-Nicene Fathers series and the Schaff-Herzog Dictionary. His tenure at Union Theological Seminary in New York and his crucial role in the Evangelical Alliance (especially the famous 1873 New York gathering) also helped secure an enduring and largely favourable legacy. Schaff’s son edited a 19th-century biography, but there is no 20th- or 21st-century attempt: Schaff, The Life of Philip Schaff in Part Autobiographical. See also Graham, Cosmos in the Chaos.


740 Philip Schaff, The Principle of Protestantism: Lancaster Series on the Mercersburg Theology, ed. Bard Thompson and George H. Bricker (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2004), 14. The editors could certainly be accused of histrionics in order to promote their republished effort, but there is truth to the dramatic foil this incident revealed between Mercersburg and most of the evangelical antebellum Americans.
Christ. It is the mystery of iniquity always ready to evolve itself anew from the depths of Satan in the soul of man as fast as circumstances will permit.\textsuperscript{741}

Though caustic to the ears of a 21\textsuperscript{st}-century hearer, the review and editorializing was rather mundane for the antebellum era. Yet it serves to highlight the dramatic shift in Nevin’s thinking as he spent the next decade obsessing over the doctrine of the Church. Four years later, a month after the Riots ended and before Schaff arrived in America, Nevin preached a sermon to the joint Triennial Convention of the Dutch and German Reformed Churches less than a hundred miles from Philadelphia. Published as \textit{Catholic Unity}, the sermon showed just how far Nevin had moved since his largely favourable review of Berg’s \textit{Lectures on Romanism} in 1840.\textsuperscript{742} Although the sermon is not as sympathetic toward Catholicism as Nevin’s writing of the early 50s, he does criticize those anti-Catholic Protestants who “in blind zeal” and “shallow knowledge” misunderstand the organic unity and development of the \textit{true} Church – something Berg would explicitly decry in his sermon to the Synod two months later. As it turned out, Nevin was the instigator, not Berg.

The Race Street pastor retaliated to Nevin’s sermon and Schaff’s address (including Nevin’s “Introduction”) by officially accusing both of “Romanizing” heresy.\textsuperscript{743} A month before the synodical trial would hear evidence from both sides – eventually exonerating both theologians by a comfortable margin – Nevin preempted his defense with a salvo of his own in

\textsuperscript{741} Nevin’s review of Berg’s \textit{Lectures on Romanism} (November 25, 1840, \textit{The Weekly Messenger}), as found in Good, \textit{History of the Reformed Church in the U.S. in the Nineteenth Century}, 115.
\textsuperscript{742} Nevin, “Catholic Unity,” \textit{Weekly Messenger of the German Reformed Church} 9, no. 49 (August 21, 1844): 465.
\textsuperscript{743} The charges of heresy were officially brought by the Classis of Philadelphia, but Berg initiated them and was supported by the prominent Helffenstein family. Schaff was officially named the defendant (though the charges were directed at both) because the charge pointed directly to his inaugural address, but the fact that four of the charges pertained to the Eucharist pointed to Nevin even more than Schaff. Both Schaff and Nevin took the stand to defend themselves at the Synod. See Bard Thompson, ed., \textit{Essays on the Heidelberg Catechism} (Philadelphia: United Church Press, 1963), 66–67; Hart, \textit{John Williamson Nevin}, 111–14.
the form of a series of five articles titled *Pseudo-Protestantism*, aimed explicitly at Berg. The battle lines were set and the fundamental theological issue at play was the Protestant Church’s connection (or lack thereof) to the Roman Catholic Church prior to the 16th-century Reformation. It was less a question of what and more a question of where is the true Church in history.

**The Visible and Invisible Church: Something that can be pointed to with the finger**

You different sects who all declare,  
Lo! Christ is here, and Christ is there!  
Your stronger proofs divinely give,  
And *show* me where the Christians live!

The Christological and pneumatological constitution of the Church explored in the last section is another way of unpacking the recurrent question of the Church’s visibility. Luther, for instance, understood the Church to be constituted by the Spirit, but its pneumatological constitution was carried out through the activity of the Word. From this we get his famous depiction of the Church as the *creatura verbi divini*. The Word itself was two-dimensional for Luther, with an “internal” (or invisible) and “external” (or visible) dimension. And so, because of his particular constitutional understanding of the Church, Luther’s articulation of the visible

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744 The articles appeared on August 16, 23, 30, September 3, 10: Nevin, “Pseudo-Protestantism,” *Weekly Messenger of the German Reformed Church* 10 (1845). He also managed a public defense of his colleague at the same time: Nevin, “Schaf on Protestantism,” *Weekly Messenger of the German Reformed Church* 10 (September 24, 1845). The official vote of the York Synod on the heresy charges was 40-7 in favour of the Mercersburg theologians.

745 Campbell, “Any Christians Among the Sects?” 567. Campbell attributes the verse to “an unknown poet” whom the British Methodist Adam Clarke quotes. The quote can be found in Clarke’s preface to the book of Acts: Adam Clarke, *The Holy Bible, Containing the Old and New Testaments* (Baltimore: Harrod, 1838). The original author appears to be Charles Wesley, though his brother John used it several times in his own writing, including a commentary on Acts 2, which was one of Campbell’s most leaned-upon ecclesiological texts. See John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament* (Miami, FL: HardPress, 2013); Fred Sanders, *Wesley on the Christian Life: The Heart Renewed in Love* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 69–70.

746 The rhetorical usage of “visible and invisible Church” should not be mistaken for a univocal theological concept, but is better understood as a “paradigmatic framework” that holds together loosely the multiple meanings of a “Church in Duality.” See Gottfried Wilhelm Locher, *Sign of the Advent: A Study in Protestant Ecclesiology* (Fribourg: Academic Press; Paulusverlag, 2004), 15. Much of the historical background of this section relies on the survey of Reformation thinkers in Locher’s work. Though I do not follow his conclusions, the analysis of the early Protestant background and context for Campbell, Hodge, and Nevin is exceedingly helpful.

747 Ibid., 23–51, 119. Yeago notes that Luther often described the “gathering and formation” of the Church as the *opus proprium* of the Holy Spirit and as a *twofold agency*: David S. Yeago, “Ecclesia Sancta, Ecclesia Peccatrix,” *Pro Ecclesia* IX, no. 3 (Summer 2000): 340, 342.
and invisible Church was differentiated from that of other reformers like Calvin or Melanchthon. All this to say that the previous section on the ecclesial constitution attempted to answer the question of *nature*, or *what is the Church?* This section, however, builds from that foundation to probe the follow-up question: *where is the Church or who is (in) the Church?*

The distinction between a “visible” and “invisible” Church was nothing new to the early Protestants like Luther. After all, Augustine himself had identified an *invisibilis compago* (invisible bond or ring) of love holding the Church together, and he also referred to the Church as a *corpus permixtum* (mixed body). Yet the topic, with all its interrelated concerns, was...

748 According to Locher, Calvin (especially early) built his understanding of the visible-invisible distinction almost exclusively from his doctrine of election and his understanding of God’s providence. Of all the Reformers only Melanchthon emphasized the visible Church almost to the complete exclusion of the invisible. In this basic way there is some correspondence with the three 19th-century thinkers under examination: Calvin reverberates in Hodge, unsurprisingly so; Luther has similarities with Nevin as noted above; and Melanchthon’s visible emphasis is repeated by Campbell. None but the Hodge-Calvin connection is made explicitly by the 19th-century thinkers, and they are certainly not all in agreement at every point, but the similarities are striking at times. For more depth on the Reformers, see Locher, *Sign of the Advent.*

Hodge notes this connection, writing, “The scriptural and Protestant doctrine of the visibility of the Church is, therefore, a corollary of the true doctrine of its nature.” Hodge, “Visibility of the Church (1853),” 62. It should be emphasized here (as it was in the previous section) that the questions *what* and *where* or *who* are not as cleanly delineated as theologians (including Hodge) might pretend; indeed, there are serious questions about whether the matter of nature can or does truly precede matters of inclusion. Does the majority of our more speculative theological reflection actually mask our more basic desire to point to who is in and who is out of the Church? I cannot address this issue in any substantial way in this work; yet it the context of the Bible Riots it is certainly worth noting that we cannot presume a unidirectional ecclesiological formation from *what* to *who* without turning a blind eye to the intensity of violence and (visible!) confusion in the fracturing context—ecclesiually, ethnically, socially, and politically so—within the American antebellum era. This is a part of a much larger argument that suggests churches did not think themselves into division, but the habitual bumping up against “the other” actually transformed their *thinking* so as to construct a justification for division. This too seems overly simplistic and does not capture the mutually informing nature of historically how these breakdowns come about, but it is overstated to make the point clear. For a constructive ecclesiological project that attempts to place the *who* question before the *what* question, see Cheryl M. Peterson, *Who Is the Church?: An Ecclesiology for the Twenty-First Century* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013).

750 Augustine, “On Baptism, Against the Donatists,” in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Philip Schaff, vol. IV, I (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974), III.19; Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine* (Oxford: OUP, 1997), III.32.45. Burleigh notes that Augustine does not use the terms “visible” and “invisible,” but that “all the materials for the distinction are to be found in his writings”: John H. S. Burleigh, *The City of God: A Study of St. Augustine’s Philosophy* (London: Nisbet & Co., 1949), 182. I am aware of the lack of consensus on Augustine’s ecclesiology and have no intention to weigh in more than necessary. However, despite his thinly cited survey, it seems plausible to me that Wiley is correct in identifying three broad camps: those scholars who place the ecclesiological primacy of Augustine on his anti-Donatist writings, those who emphasize the anti-Pelagian writings, and those who look first to *The City of God*. Wiley displays why some scholars tend to prioritize the “institutional” character of the Church and its visibility through its sacraments because of his anti-Donatist works; others, he insists, see the “predestinarian” impact of his Pelagian writings as displaying a preference for the idea of an invisible Church; while still others
taken up with renewed fervor during the Reformation era for apparent reasons. To be outside the Church of Rome necessitated some explanation for where the true Church was and who was, and was not, a part of it. To help frame the question, McNeill has identified three ways in which early Reformed Christians understood the Church to be invisible:

(1) The number of those within the true church is veiled from human eyes; its extent and limits are unknown to all but God. (2) The true church cannot as a whole assemble in one place where it may be observed. (3) In times of religious depression, as in the days of Elijah and the late medieval period, the true church is driven almost to invisibility, while that which men account the church is so corrupted as not to merit the designation.

Protestants of the 19th century were no less enthralled than their Reformer forbearers by the desire to differentiate between the visible and invisible Church, though both their underlying theological rationale and their particular explications varied significantly. At the root of these differences are two separate but related questions that will be explored in this section: Where was the Church?; and, Where is Church? The first question has to do with the history of the

promote an “idealistic” vision of the Church by using The City of God as a lens for the rest of Augustine’s corpus. See Charles Aden Wiley III, “Responding to God: The Church as Visible and Invisible in Calvin, Schleiermacher, and Barth” (Ph.D., Princeton Theological Seminary, 2002), 39ff.


751 John T. McNeill, “The Church in Sixteenth-Century Reformed Theology,” The Journal of Religion 22, no. 3 (1942): 268. As will be shown, numbers 1 and 3 will play prominently in the section, while number 2 was not of concern to the 19th-century theologians.

752 Part of Locher’s argument is that there is significant confusion around the Reformers’ use of the distinction between the visible and invisible Church, because they used the same terminology but meant significantly different things by it. In this study, however, the three 19th-century theologians under examination actually use different terms, which makes their nuances clearer to the reader.

753 I will also use the somewhat awkward question When was the Church? to help distinguish the retrospective examination of the question Where is the Church?. The where in the questions above is intended to be used as a synecdoche, representing both where and who. Although not delineating the two questions expressly, Turner makes a similar point in his discussion of “The Invisible Church” among 19th-century evangelicals in the Anglo-American world. He summarizes, “Identification with the invisible church permitted evangelical Christians to transcend the inherent parochialism of their prayer meetings, devotional groups, barn congregations, and isolated chapels by filling their minds and spirits with the image of a Christian community that included not only themselves but like-minded people elsewhere in Britain, on the Continent, on the American frontier, and in the struggling missionary congregations in the most remote parts of the globe… Theirs was a faith existing through the centuries which must again and again be revived after periods of declension and corruption in the realm of visible Christian
Church – and history itself – while the second question emerges from the first, but primarily aims to justify a particular ecclesiological vision or understanding. Hodge and Nevin primarily approach this set of questions through Augustine’s idea of the “ring of love” that binds the true Church, while Campbell is more occupied with engaging a certain “mixed” nature of the Church. There is, of course, significant overlap in the approaches, but the distinction is crucial to understand, among other things, why Campbell could reject the category of the invisible Church and still struggle to discern how there were “Christians Among the Sects.”

Hodge

Bauder, in his dissertation, claims that “At the core of Hodge’s ecclesiology is the question of whether the true church is visible or invisible.” Because of the central place this distinction has in Hodge’s ecclesiology, this section will focus disproportionately on unpacking why this was the case. Unlike both Campbell and Nevin, Hodge had no aversion to the traditional Protestant denotation of visible and invisible, employing the terms liberally in his ecclesiological articles. However, that did not stop him from introducing different, cognate terms to help emphasize his particular understanding of the distinction: real and nominal. His institutions.” Frank Miller Turner, John Henry Newman: The Challenge to Evangelical Religion (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2002), 42.

754 The title “Christians Among the Sects” is taken from Campbell’s second response to the so-called Lunenburg Letter” in the MH of 1837. This letter and Campbell’s response will be unpacked further below.

755 Bauder, “Communion of the Saints,” 129. He later reiterates this point, writing, “Even a cursory reading of Hodge’s ecclesiology reveals that his notion of the invisible church operated as the core of his theory of the church” (142). It is true that Hodge’s emphasis on this distinction through the 50s seems to coincide with his most aggressive anti-High Church campaign, as Bademan points out, but the context does not discount the foundational place it holds within his ecclesiology over time. Bademan’s caution not to overstate the case is valid, in other words, but offers no alternative narrative or evidence for the inconsistency of this writing in Hodge’s entire corpus. See Bademan, “Contesting the Evangelical Age,” 269n98.

756 Somewhat surprisingly, in his posthumously published collection of ecclesiological articles, The Church and its Polity, there are only 25 usages of the term “invisible,” but 225 usages of the term “visible” or its cognates!

757 His most explicit connection is as follows: “Hence arises the distinction between the real and the nominal, or, as it is commonly expressed, the invisible and the visible Church.” Hodge, “Theories of the Church (1846),” 41–42. See also Hodge, “Visibility of the Church (1853),” 59–63. The lexical range of real and nominal is markedly different than invisible and visible, and Hodge made use of that difference. He uses each about 25 times in this context in The Church and its Polity. Hodge also uses nominal and real in their more common evangelical usage in relation to individuals as shorthand for false and true Christians respectively. In 19th-century America this
employment of these terms helps bring into relief what he understood to be the proper Reformed ecclesiological heritage. Hodge wanted to be clear that when he was referring to the invisible Church, what he was referencing could also simply be denoted as the real Church. And, conversely, when he explicitly referenced the visible (or more often external) Church, he meant the nominal Church – the Church in name only – and not the real Church. Such a stark division between the two categories has left some interpreters of Hodge wondering if there was any essential connection between the two at all in his understanding. Hodge himself feeds this flame by his inconsistent usage of terms. A powerful example comes from his article “The Idea of the Church”:

> Again, the conception of the Church as the communion of saints, does not include the idea of any external organization. The bond of union may be spiritual. There may be communion without external organized union. The Church, therefore, according to this view, is not essentially a visible society; it is not a corporation which ceases to exist if the external bond of union be dissolved. It may be proper that such a union should exist; it may be true that it has always existed; but it is not necessary. The Church, as such, is not

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758 However, the terms also need to be unpacked because of the philosophical connotations. First, there was no direct allusion to a Platonic Realism. The real was not, according to Hodge, some ideal Church standing behind the particular instantiations of the church, but a “company of believers” subsisting within the mixed body of ecclesial societies that organize and do things that visible organizations do. The fact that this philosophical background was undergirding Augustine’s distinction is particularly interesting, but cannot be explored further here. See Hodge, The Church and Its Polity, 57; J. N. D. Kelly, Early Christian Doctrines (New York: Harper, 1959), 415. Second, though Hodge was more of an Ockhamist Nominalist than a Platonic Realist, his usage of nominal within this pairing was not intended to conjure metaphysical presuppositions. The visible Church was nominal simply because it was the Church in name only – not delineating the boundaries of the true Church. For a more general examination of Hodge’s philosophy, see Peter Hicks, The Philosophy of Charles Hodge: A 19th-Century Evangelical Approach to Reason, Knowledge, and Truth (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1997); DiPuccio, “The Dynamic Realism of Mercersburg Theology,” 2–61.

759 Reynolds goes so far as to open his dissertation by claiming, “The primary feature of [Hodge’s] ecclesiological center was a minimalist definition of the nature of the visible church.” Reynolds, “Charles Hodge’s Ecclesiastical Elencities,” I. Troxel concludes, “Hodge defined the church from an exclusively ‘invisible’ perspective, even though this is not compatible with the Reformed Presbyterian tradition.” Troxel, “Charles Hodge on Church Boards,” 205. See also Holifield, “Mercersburg, Princeton, and the South,” 250; DiPuccio, “The Dynamic Realism of Mercersburg Theology,” 291n14, 364ff. Here Bauder defends Hodge against such extreme interpretations largely by placing him in his Reformed context from Turretin through to his successors at Princeton: Bauder, “Communion of the Saints,” 142–54.

760 Hodge also used the terms “external” and “internal.” Compounding the confusions simply from the multitude of terms was the fact that he was sometimes referenced the “external” or “visible” manifestations of the real or true or spiritual Church. This inconsistency makes it challenging to decipher the referent for many of the terms used.
a visible society. All visible union, all external organization, may cease, and yet, so long as there are saints who have communion, the Church exists, if the Church is the communion of saints. That communion may be in faith, in love, in obedience to a common Lord. It may have its origin in something deeper still; in the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, even the Spirit of Christ, by which every member is united to Christ, and all the members are joined in one body. This is an union far more real, a communion far more intimate, than subsists between the members of any visible society as such.  

This subsection will unpack the various aspects of this quote, beginning with the realization that Hodge’s ecclesiology was driven in large part by his soteriology.

On Salvation

Trying to capture Hodge’s soteriology in one small subsection is impossible. After all, he devoted the entire final volume of his *Systematic Theology* to the topic – the largest of the three volumes. Therefore this section will examine one small though crucial idea in his soteriology. The importance of saying something, however brief, of Hodge’s soteriology is underscored by Hodge himself when he wrote: “If a man is not justified, sanctified, and consecrated to God, he is not a saint, and therefore does not belong to the Church, which is the communion of saints.”

The collection of saints, in other words, is the sum of the *true* Church; and in order to know what exactly a saint was, a brief soteriological excursus on Hodge’s understanding of “union with Christ” is necessary.

In an 1845 review article, Hodge wrote,

Again, can any reader of the Bible, can any Christian at least, doubt that union with Christ, was to the apostles one of the most important and dearest of all the doctrines of

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764 This sentence may seem too conceptually clean and straightforward, yet it is not an oversimplification of how Hodge himself viewed ecclesiological exploration: “To determine, therefore, the true idea of the Church, it is only necessary to ascertain who are meant by the ‘saints,’ and the nature of their communion, or the essential bond by which they are united.” Hodge, “Idea of the Church,” 6.
the gospel; a doctrine which lay at the root of all the other doctrines of redemption, the foundation of their hopes, the source of their spiritual life.

Union with Christ was the “root” of Hodge’s soteriological understanding, just as it was for so much Reformed theology from Calvin forward. Here we see the two emphases of Hodge’s theology discussed earlier – the objective and subjective – come together in one theological idea. Union with Christ was both a pretemporal federal reality of a covenant of redemption between the Father and the Son that engrafted saints through election, as well as a temporal union engaged through the objective work of the Spirit and the subjective acceptance of Christ, through the Spirit, in the faith of the individual. Admittedly, the whole process of union with Christ was “mysterious” according to Hodge, but clearly revealed by the Scriptures that are “filled with this doctrine.”

The federal relationship of Christ and the saints, “between the head and the members of the same body,” was entirely grounded in Hodge’s understanding of the doctrine of election. Deifell’s summary is helpful:

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767 Hodge articulates this twofold “union” as a threefold one in his commentary on 1 Corinthians, writing, “To be in Christ Jesus is to be united to him, 1. Representatively, as we were in Adam, Rom. 5:12–21; 1 Cor. 15:22. 2. Vitally, as a branch is in the vine, or a member in the body, John 15:1–7. 3. Consciously and voluntarily by faith, Rom. 8:1, et passim.” Hodge, *An Exposition of the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 26. However, the conflation of #2 and #3 above has to do with the shared emphasis on the Spirit in contrast to the christological focus of the first one.

768 Ibid., Holifield corroborates this point, writing, “Hodge… believed that the ‘true doctrine concerning the way of salvation leads to the true theory of the Church.’ Since he grounded salvation on the arbitrary imputation of righteousness to the elect, he defined the Church as simply ‘the whole number of the elect’ and insisted that the visible organization was an expedient but superfluous attribute”: Holifield, “Mercersburg, Princeton, and the South,” 250.
Christ is the federal head of all true believers. He represents them in the councils of eternity when the covenant of redemption was formed. He acted for all saints when He fulfilled that covenant’s conditions. And as the representative head of His inherited Church, Christ mediates the covenant of grace between God and the saint. Hodge insisted that Christ’s representation was not for all people, but just for those members of His true Church.\textsuperscript{770}

Here we come to the main point of this soteriological excursus. The Church, in either its \textit{invisible} or \textit{visible} manifestations, is not \textit{something} that is instrumental in the plan of salvation for Hodge.\textsuperscript{771} In fact, he assumes that its formation is merely the inexorable result of the individual saints being united to Christ through eternal election, the work of the cross, and the indwelling of the Spirit (\textit{ie.} election, justification, and sanctification). It is an “unscriptural assumption,” boasts Hodge, “that we become united to Christ by being united to the Church as an external visible society.” Instead, he continues “union with Christ in the divine order precedes, and is entirely independent of union with any visible society.”\textsuperscript{772} Within the invisible society – the \textit{true} Church – when a saint is joined to Christ through the Spirit, there is a subsequent union with the Church, but this is a consequence of the salvific union with Christ. The overall implication is twofold. First, union with Christ coincides with union with the \textit{real} Church, but the former is the true causal agent of the latter; and second, there is no essential correlation between the two “societies” (visible and invisible), which appear to be categorically distinct.\textsuperscript{773}

\textsuperscript{770} Deifell, “The Ecclesiology of Charles Hodge,” 51. Hodge claimed that he was following Owen when he promoted that idea of the “form” of the Church being a covenant and the “matter” being the saints: Hodge, \textit{The Church and Its Polity}, 101. Hodge was not afraid to use Owen as a source and he was clearly familiar with his writings, but he preferred citing Augustine or Calvin. In the collection of essays \textit{The Church and Its Polity}, he cites (positively) Owen only four times, but Augustine and Calvin a dozen times and more than two dozen times respectively.

\textsuperscript{771} Hart agrees, writing, “So intent on defending the Reformed doctrine of salvation and the importance of the imputed righteousness of Christ, Hodge believed the evangelical theory of the church began and concluded with the status of the individual Christian believer… The invisible character of the church stemmed from the difference between its real and nominal members.” Hart, “The Church in Evangelical Theologies, Past and Future,” 34.

\textsuperscript{772} Hodge, \textit{The Church and Its Polity}, 75–76.

The invisible society is formed through the election of saints who are united with Christ through their eternal predestination and the objective and subjective work of the Holy Spirit. As such, these elect ones are *de facto* united to each other through Christ. Consequently, there is simply no room in Hodge’s theology for the visible society to carry any related soteriological burden within its essence. There are questions that arise from this excursus that need to be kept in mind through the remainder of this section: What is the nature of an invisible society? Is an invisible society, in other words, by definition an oxymoron? What is the point of an invisible Church if it simply denotes the eternally elect? Is the invisible Church temporally identifiable or only an eschatological reality? It is this final question that will be picked up next.

*If not Where then When?*

One way of examining the question of the visibility of the Church is to do so synchronically. By this we must examine what Hodge had to say about the Church – in its visible and invisible manifestations – in his context and at a particular point in time. This is the essence of the question “Where is the Church?” Still, there is another way to examine the question by asking a different but related question: “When was the Church?” The question itself sounds odd to the ear, but its intention is to probe Hodge’s diachronic understanding of the *true* Church to see how that might inform the discussion of visibility. When Hodge looked back through history,

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774 There are a few places that Hodge seems to reverse the order so as to make salvation appear dependent on the Church, but he actually only does so rhetorically, not theologically (or even chronologically). For instance, he wrote, “The church is the body of Christ. It consists of those in whom he dwells by his Spirit. To be alien from the church, therefore, is to be an alien from God. It is to be without Christ and without hope. The church of which this is said is not the nominal, external, visible church as such, but the true people of God.” To be “without Christ and without hope,” as Hodge puts it, because one is not in the *true* Church, has less to do with the individual than it does with their election which must precede inclusion in Christ and His Church. To put it another way, one cannot simply join a church in order to not be “alien from God,” as Hodge seems to indicate in the quote. The union with Christ through the Spirit is the only thing that guarantees entrance into the invisible Church. Hodge, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians*, 123–24.
could he point to the true Church? If yes, then the logical corollaries follow: What does it look like; Who is it; How can you distinguish it from the rest of Church History?\textsuperscript{775}

\textsuperscript{775} The 19\textsuperscript{th}-century explosion within the field of “Church History” is not incidental here. Although the discipline of “historiography” was not yet developed in the academic sense, different schools of historical analysis were emerging with contested validity. Although many point to Leopold von Ranke as the father of modern Church History, his work was less known and celebrated in America in the antebellum period. His use and refinement of the Göttingen School of History from the 18\textsuperscript{th} century has an interesting connection here, as two of the earliest Americans to study in Germany (Edward Everett of Harvard and Robert Patton of the College of New Jersey) were located at Göttingen, and Patton helped influence Hodge to take his two-year sojourn. Hodge originally planned to study at Göttingen after his time in Berlin, but was convinced by Tholuck to go to Halle instead due to its reputation for piety and the fading influence of the Göttingen faculty of theology. See Andrew Hansen, “Nineteenth-Century Transatlantic Protestantism,” Pietismus Und Neuzeit 37 (2011): 191–210. Hodge’s European journals have been published for the first time by Logos recently: Charles Hodge, Journal of European Travels: March 1827–April 1828 (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, Logos Bible Software, 2016).

For Hodge and Nevin the Berlin School was more important for the work of August Neander (and Hegel and even Schleiermacher) than Ranke. In fact, Nevin credited Neander – as Kant credited Hume – with being the one who “broke up his dogmatic slumbers” and praised him as the “father of Church History, vastly learned and profoundly pious.” Nevin, “My Own Life,” June 15, 1870. The Princeton cadre were largely opposed to the Romanticist incursion in the field and even more adamantly against the Post-Kantian Idealists, while Mercersburg, as has been shown, was welcoming in large part to both, though they chastened each school’s conclusions, using their methodology for their more orthodox purposes. Later in his career Nevin begins to distance himself more from Neander, whom he saw as falling into the typical evangelical errors of spiritualizing the Church through history: the “mysticism of the Quakers” and the “rationalism of the Baptists” (385). His second “Cyprian” article ends up being a long apology for the Cyprianic vision of the Church over and against Neander’s dismissal of Cyprian’s teaching. He concludes by writing, “[Neander’s history] is taken from the cloud land simply of his own brain, like a vast deal more that we meet with in the landscape painting of the same distinguished writer. All comes to this only, that Neander’s preconception here is contradicted by the actual state of things in the time of Cyprian, and therefore the time of Cyprian must be a departure, in the direction of this difference, from the original sense and spirit of the Gospel. It never seems to enter the mind of the great man, that the false reckoning might be on his own side possibly, and not with the age which is thus conveniently put in the wrong… Cyprian may be right after all, we repeat, and Neander wrong.” Nevin, “Cyprian,” 385–86. Despite the extended critique explicitly directed at Neander in the article, Nevin still refers to him as “the great German master of church history.” Ibid., 384.

Richardson, in summarizing the historical sources at Campbell’s disposal, notes that he likely did not have a “carefully thought out philosophy of history” (83). Though Campbell used Gibbon in his work (especially in the debate with Purcell) he was less enthralled with the “rationalist historians” of the late 18\textsuperscript{th} century than with the earlier “ecclesiastical historians,” according to Richardson. Sources such as Louis Du Pin, Johann von Mosheim (whose work Nevin used as a teaching text at Western Theological Seminary in the late 30s), and Nathaniel Lardner became Campbell’s standard texts, and though he had read Hume and Voltaire, he generally disliked their work (though admitted their genius). The one contemporary that Campbell was drawn to was Francois Pierre Guizot, though it is unclear how far he promoted the historiographical method associated with Guizot. See William Judson Richardson, “Alexander Campbell’s Use of History in His Apologetical Theology” (Ph.D., University of Oregon, 1962), 83–97; Campbell, Popular Lectures and Addresses, 73–94. One could make an argument that the root of the Campbell-Purcell debate was actually history, not ecclesiology or education or the social benefits of either Catholicism or Protestantism (which were the ostensible points of disagreement). Not only were the arguments rooted in historical precedence rather than abstract principles, but some of the most contentious parts of the debate were over the validity of sources and the accuracy of historical texts under discussion. After recounting Campbell’s broad argument against Purcell, Shea exclaims, “The Centuritators of Magdeburg return!” Shea, The Lion and the Lamb, 114. For two secondary sources that address these issues, see Mark Weedman, “History as Authority in Alexander Campbell’s 1837 Debate with Bishop Purcell,” Fides et Historia 28, no. 2 (June 1, 1996): 17–34; Eva Jean Wrather, “A Nineteenth Century Disciples-Catholic Dialogue,” Mid-Stream 25, no. 4 (October 1, 1986): 368–74.
Here it is helpful to return to Hodge’s own denotation: real and nominal. For the Presbyterian churchman, the invisible Church was the true or real Church, and this Church, though invisible in composition through the Spirit’s work of uniting individual saints to Christ (invisibilis compago), was also visible through the outward acts of the individual and collective saints in time.\textsuperscript{776} Stated differently, the invisible Church was bound together spiritually, but was still theoretically visibly discernable – at least intermittently so – within the flow of history.\textsuperscript{777} The visible Church, on the other hand, “lapsed into idolatry” as a “whole external organization” at various periods of history because it sinfully stifled the invisible Church.\textsuperscript{778} The external Church could never be equated directly with the real Church, but it could, in theory, avoid outright and ongoing apostasy by aligning itself closely with the real Church. The ability to adjudicate whether there was or was not correspondence between the invisible and visible was impossible in real time according to Hodge, only being accessible in hindsight. It was impossible to answer \textit{Who is the Church?} definitively for Hodge, but looking back through history and asking \textit{When was the Church?} presented itself as a legitimate and helpful endeavor.

At the core of Hodge’s limited historical reflection on the true Church is the perennial question raised by Roman Catholics: “Where was your Church before the time of Luther?” Hodge addressed this question head-on by replying, “Just where it was after Luther. \textit{Ubi vera}

\textsuperscript{776} The real Church is visible, but “its visibility is not that of an external society, but such as belongs to the true body of Christ, whose members are known by the fruits of the Spirit manifested in their lives.” Hodge, “Visibility of the Church (1853),” 61.

\textsuperscript{777} Hodge proudly boasts of the true or real Church, writing, “she has left a track of glory through all history, since the day of Pentecost, so that it can be traced and verified, in all ages and in all parts of the world.” Ibid., 57. Not only is it visible, but the “track of glory” through history is actually testable. There is no postmodern consternation over history being interpretation \textit{all the way down}. Instead Hodge assumes the factuality of his statement about the true Church in history, just as he would any other verifiable proposition. This entire discussion is a riff on McNeil’s third description of how the “invisible” Church was understood by the Reformers. Hodge’s take on this theme is extreme and goes beyond “the true church” being “driven \textit{almost to invisibility},” to the claim that the medieval Church outright disappeared. McNeill, “The Church in Sixteenth-Century Reformed Theology,” 268.

\textsuperscript{778} Hodge, “Visibility of the Church (1853),” 61.
And so, on one level at least, Hodge’s answer to the question of *When was the Church?* adamantly maintained that the Church was and is always among the saints through history because “God has promised to be with his Church” and “his presence is operative… perpetual and all-pervading.” Hodge never tired of promoting the Augustinian idea of a *corpus permixtum* (or *ecclesia mixta*), noting that many were “of the Church,” but few were “in the Church.” Yet, for Hodge, there was something distinctly different about the pre- and post-Reformation Church which might be called his problem of correspondence. The problem of correspondence is a question about the particular arrangement within the *corpus permixtum*: the challenge of attempting to articulate the relationship between the real (invisible) and nominal (visible) Church.

Beginning with his understanding of the Church since the Reformation, Hodge attempted to nuance a way in which the invisible Church was independent of, but existed within, the visible Church. The invisible Church was, in other words, “[apart] from any outward organization,” yet at the same time it was found “in the midst of all organizations.” No single church (or denomination) could lay claim to the invisible Church, but the latter was to be found among the churches, creating a mixed reality within each and every ecclesial organization. He used the analogy of the body and soul, where the latter took up “residence” in the former with life-giving force, but was unmistakably of a different nature. This understanding was rather conventional,

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779 “But where there is true faith, there is the Church.” Hodge, *The Church and Its Polity*, 87.
782 Hodge, *The Church and Its Polity*.
783 “[I]t is undeniable that the visible Church is always a mixed body, and often controlled in its action by wicked or worldly men.” Hodge, “Idea of the Church (1853),” 36.
784 Hodge, “Visibility of the Church (1853),” 57–58. This word picture of a body-soul relationship is also very Augustinian in nature. Though writing specifically about “Communion Ecclesiology,” Mendy outlines the scope of Augustine’s employment of the analogy as Augustine attributed it to the Church: Gabriel Mendy,
but serves to highlight an inconsistency in Hodge as he looked further back before the
Reformation period, as explored below.

As Hodge reflected on the Church’s pre-Reformation existence, he seemed largely
content to assign the entire visible Church to the trash heap of apostasy, writing, “Every
conspicuous organization had lapsed into idolatry, and yet the Church was continued in
thousands of God’s chosen ones who never bowed the knee to Baal.”785 The pre-Reformation
Church was the nominal Church’s nadir, according to Hodge, as the “papacy of the middle ages
had no more affinity with Christianity, than the idolatry of the Hebrews with the religion of the
Old Testament.”786 Hodge went on in a review of Schaff’s book to again compare Baal worship
in Israel to the Catholic Church before the Reformation.787 But just here, there is a challenge
which Hodge did not seem to be aware of: if the very structure of the papacy was analogous with
false or idol worship, as he implies in the first quote and directly asserts in the review of Schaff’s

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“Augustine’s Analogy between the Spirit in the Church and the Soul in the Body and Its Implications for
Communion Ecclesiology” (Ph.D., Duquesne University, 2009), 143ff.

785 Hodge, The Church and Its Polity, 77. Highlighting Hodge’s inconsistency, he appears to contradict this
very notion, writing, “We do not hold to an entire apostasy of even the outward Church before the Reformation. It is
an historical fact that (excepting the Arian ascendency,) the inspiration of the Scriptures, the doctrine of the Trinity,
the true divinity and humanity of the Saviour, the fall of man, redemption by the blood of Christ, and regeneration
and sanctification by His Spirit, were held by the Church universal.” Hodge, “History of the Apostolic Church.”
Notice the difference, however, between the focus on “organization” in the quote above and “doctrinal” measures in
the footnoted quote. He is indicating here that there were still true Christians (largely because they held right beliefs)
and therefore, the Church had not entirely apostatized – even if it was distinct from the Roman system.

786 Hodge, “History of the Apostolic Church.” In the review Hodge actually singles out the “tenth century”
as an era where it may be impossible to find true “faith” outwardly displayed among the church or her members. He
continues on, writing, “The idea that the popes, cardinals, bishops, and other ecclesiastics of that period, who in so
many cases according to the testimony of Roman Catholic writers themselves, were heretical, lewd, treacherous,
murderous, were the chief organs of the ‘body of Christ,’ controlled by his life, and authorized to determine the
discipline, doctrine, and worship of the Church, is so monstrous a delusion, that its adoption seems to argue judicial
blindness.”

787 This analogy is particularly striking in this context as it takes the opposite approach to his millenarian
scorn recounted in the first chapter (1.2), where Hodge used the “Jews” as the measurement of heresy. Now, we
have the “Jews” as the faithful, while the nominal amongst them are apostatizing by practicing Baal worship
alongside their proper cultic adherence to Yahweh. It should be noted, however, that even here Hodge takes little
care to promote the “faithful” members of the Israelite nation who presumably did not bend a knee to Baal. In fact,
he phrases it in such a condemnatory manner that it seems the entire nation had lapsed, thereby actually perpetuating
his archetypical usage of the “Jews” as a placeholder for heresy rather than having it contradicted. For an engaging
look at the place of the “Jews” in heresiology, see Ephraim Radner, A Brutal Unity: The Spiritual Politics of the
work, then the real Church was not an ingredient in a corpus permixtum, but some sort of over-and-against, pure, society-less dispersion of elect saints outside the nominal Church. Just so, the invisible Church, for Hodge, was almost always defined in opposition to the visible one. It was not, in other words, “in the midst” of the nominal, as he claimed it was in the post-Reformation churches. He confessed as much, writing, “We must either admit that the Church perished during these periods, or that it was continued in the scattered, unorganized believers.” It was not simply that there happened to be no apparent correspondence between the invisible and the visible, but in the pre-Reformation Church, Hodge was adamant that they did not overlap, full stop. For how could one be a saint and engage knowingly in idol worship? The pre-Reformation Church could not be a “yes” in any measure according to Hodge, otherwise the “no” of Protestantism (literally protest-antism) was not only illogical, but heretical. “We are reduced,” affirmed the resolute Protestant theologian, “to the absolute necessity of admitting that the outward Church, during the middle ages, departed from the pure gospel.” It was either this conclusion, or one must “[give] up the cause of Protestantism.”

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788 Therefore, he can use real and nominal as cognates for invisible and visible, respectively, despite their significantly different semantic range. The terms visible and invisible are not typically used in a descriptive manner by Hodge, as the visible Church is not simply what is seen and the invisible Church what is unseen. Rather, his introduction and direct equation (on multiple occasions) with nominal and visible makes it clear that most often when Hodge uses visible he is making a evaluative judgment that what he is referring to is “hypocritical.” When Hodge wants to be historically descriptive about the Church that is/was seen, he generally prefers the title “outward” or even “external” Church.

789 Hodge, “Visibility of the Church (1853),” 61.

790 It is worth noting here that Hodge had a secondary theory of how, possibly, the relationship between the real and nominal might exist. He hinted that they may be inversely proportional where the more corrupt the visible Church is, the “higher” the “spiritual excellence” of the invisible Church would be. Here he thinks the hidden but bold faith of the 10th-century and pre-Reformation saints – over and against the visible Church – will “be realized in a remarkable manner when Christ comes to judgment… [and] may be standing at an elevation which the Church has never yet reached.” Hodge, “History of the Apostolic Church.” On the one hand, he indicates that the real Church is at its apex when the nominal Church is at its nadir, but, on the other hand, the advances of Protestantism which have strengthened the correspondence between the real and nominal are a boon to the real Church overall. It is not, of course, a complete contradiction to posit both things; however, it does present itself as Hodge wanting his cake and eating it too without offering a sustained reflection on the relationship between both theories.

791 Hodge, “History of the Apostolic Church.” Later in the same article, disputing Nevin, he reiterates the claim: “He will either give up that idea of the Church, and adhere to Protestantism; or he will adhere to the idea of
It is difficult to extract clear conclusions from Hodge’s limited and often inconsistent reflections on the visibility of the Church through history. There are, however, a few vital points that must be reiterated. Hodge did not spiritualize history in the same way he spiritualized the Church. When Hodge looked back and asked “When was the Church?” he could not look past the failures and follies of the institutional Church through the centuries. These failures could not be reconciled with the real Church in his mind. This, in turn, created the problem of correspondence between the real and nominal, where he vacillated between emphasizing the vast chasm between the two and indicating that the real Church subsisted within the nominal Church as a “numerical subset.” Hodge seemed to care little to respond to this problem of correspondence.

**The Visible Invisibility of the True Church**

Despite the diachronic look at the nature of the ecclesia mixta through the history of the Church, there remains the question of the nature of the invisible Church itself. As we asked above, what does it mean to talk of an invisible society as the real Church? Hodge was quick to dismiss the idea that because the Church’s primary bond of union was unseen, then the Body of Christ must be composed of “disembodied spirits or angels.” He affirmed that “the Church on earth consists of visible men and women, and not of invisible spirits,” though it is not directly

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792 One of the most extended proofs of this historical outlook is Hodge, “Idea of the Church (1853).” Here he claims, among other straightforward interpretations of the Church’s failures, “No such society has had the persistency in truth and holiness, which the divine presence of necessity secures. If in one age it professes the truth, in another it professes error. If at one time its members appear holy, at another they are most manifestly corrupt. Or, if some manifest the presence of the Spirit, others give evidence that they are not under his influence. It is, therefore, just as plain that God is not always present with the external Church, as that the sun is not always above our horizon. The nominal Church would correspond with the real, the visible with the invisible, if the promise of the divine presence belonged to the former. With his own people God is always present; they, therefore, must constitute that Church to whom the promise of his presence belongs” (29-30). See also Ibid., 16.

793 See Wiley III, “Responding to God,” 40.

794 Hodge, “Visibility of the Church (1853),” 56. Hodge was responding to the mockery of the Jesuit Counter-Reformer Cardinal Robert Bellarmine (he spells it Bellarmin) whom he quoted as saying, “Surely the Church does not consist of ghosts!” Hodge picks up his engagement with Bellarmine in another article from the same year: Hodge, “Idea of the Church (1853),” 19–20.
equivalent with the nominal Church that was made up of all who profess to be Christians.\textsuperscript{795} Yet, despite reeling off a list of appropriate designators for the real Church (communion of saints; congregatio sanctorum; company of faithful men; and the mystical body of Christ), Hodge failed to elaborate on the nature of their visibility beyond reasserting that they are “not the company or organization of professing men” which was the “fundamental error of Romanism.”\textsuperscript{796} The visibility of the invisible Church was not, maintained Hodge, something “that [could] be pointed to with the finger”\textsuperscript{797} because it had no outward form of “association.”\textsuperscript{798} Though its components – the saints and their works – were visible, the “bond” of the real Church was unquestionably imperceptible. This posed a major hurdle for Hodge: if the bond itself was imperceptible, then could the true professors of faith be identified in distinction from the nominal ones?\textsuperscript{799} Hodge’s answer involved both a yes and a no.\textsuperscript{800}

The “yes” involved in identifying the saints, according to Hodge, was twofold. There were two essential characteristics needed to identify a saint or a member of the real Church: first, the professing of correct doctrine; and second, the love of Christ embodied.\textsuperscript{801} Members of the

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext[795]{Hodge, “Visibility of the Church (1853),” 56.}
\footnotetext[796]{Hodge, “Review: The Mystical Presence.” See also his section on “The Perpetuity of the Church” in The Church and Its Polity, 73-78, where he includes Anglicans in his critique of Roman Catholics.}
\footnotetext[797]{Hodge, “The Church - Its Perpetuity.”}
\footnotetext[798]{Hodge, The Church and Its Polity, 419.}
\footnotetext[799]{Admittedly the question here is itself an issue – how could one identify the true saints somehow apart from the invisible bond which Hodge insisted was real, but imperceptible? If one could identify all the true saints then theoretically the “invisible” Church would be fully visible, except for the invisible bond which was invisible. This could not be accepted by Hodge, who insisted that the collection of individual saints exhausted the definition of the Church; therefore, insinuating that the bond itself was something essential to the true Church would be notably problematic for Hodge. The question is raised here because Hodge’s logic, if not his theological explication, demands the follow through.}
\footnotetext[800]{For Hodge’s most honest wrestling with this seeming contradiction, see Hodge, “Theories of the Church (1846),” 41–42.}
\footnotetext[801]{Hodge, “History of the Apostolic Church.” Hodge gives a snippet of those doctrines necessary for proper profession and teaching, listing the examples of “the inspiration of the Scriptures, the doctrine of the Trinity, the true divinity and humanity of the Saviour, the fall of man, redemption by the blood of Christ, and regeneration and sanctification by his Spirit,” with the counterexample of the Arian heresy. In his outline notes (unpublished) for his essay on “The Idea of the Church,” Hodge regularly refers to the true Church as those who rightly “profess” the faith. This lends significant support to the point above that it is not only “by their love” that the saints are known, but also by their particular profession or confession of the faith. The fact that many of these instances were removed}
true Church were marked by right doctrine and right living. This understanding, however, further muddied the water as the “fruits” of charity were contestable and the “profession” of true doctrine even more so. The adjudicative challenge in determining a saint, in turn, led to the “no” involved in Hodge’s response, which was rooted in what might be termed Hodge’s pious agnosticism. In humanity’s temporally bound and fallen state, it was impossible, claimed Hodge, to have a universal perspective unclouded by sin from which to judge right doctrine and right living. And so, “[we] are therefore bound,” admitted Hodge, “to regard and treat every man as a believer who makes a credible profession of faith in Christ; and of course we are bound to regard and treat any body of such men as a Church.” In theory then, the ostensible saints – those with a credible doctrinal profession – could be “pointed to with the finger,” and even though these individuals were not necessarily “constituent members” of the real Church, they collectively helped to show forth the whole company of true believers that made up the real Church. Still, in the end, Hodge’s real Church was invisible for two reasons: first, it was

or worded differently when Hodge eventually published the essay is noteworthy. First, Hodge seems to be aware of the confusion it could cause when he primarily used “professors” with a negative connotation as a counter to true Christians; but, second, and perhaps more importantly, by the time the article was published Hodge appeared more realistic about the magnitude of the problem that correspondence poses to the theologian. See, as an example of one such unpublished usage: “How far is the external church the true church? 1. Just so far as it consists of believers. 2. When are we bound to recognise any body as a church[?] An[swer:] Just so far as we are bound to recognise them as believers. Therefore any body which… professes the true faith.” Charles Hodge, “The Idea of the Church” (Princeton, NJ, undated), Box 10:2, The Charles Hodge Manuscript Collection, Princeton Theological Seminary Libraries.

One could certainly make a sustained argument that this humility was rooted in Hodge’s Calvinistic theological anthropology. The reality of sin weighs heavily upon the doctrine of the Church according to Hodge. Though Hodge does not make the explicit argument against Nevin, it always seems to lurk in the background that the latter seems to say too much about the Church without recognizing his own sinful perspective and the sinful reality of the Church itself.

Here Hodge is clearly engaged with McNeill’s first description (rather than the third as he was in the section above) as to how the duality of visible and invisible was used by the Reformers: “the true church is veiled from human eyes; its extent and limits are unknown to all but God.” McNeill, “The Church in Sixteenth-Century Reformed Theology,” 268.

Hodge, “Validity of Romish Baptism,” 206.

Hodge, “Theories of the Church (1846),” 41–42. Here Hodge is less clear than one would wish. He does not engage how the nominal Church “shows forth” the real Church, but presents it simply as a given.
impossible for fallible, limited humans to correctly identify the saints of which the Church was comprised; and second, the bond of union itself was an imperceptible one.

**Conclusion of Hodge’s Real and Nominal Church**

What do we make of all this in Hodge’s ecclesiology? Two related but distinct ideas can be summarized. First, Hodge struggled to chart a path through his problem of correspondence between the *visible* and *invisible* Church. At times he appeared to think there could be synergy, and at others he saw the *real* and *nominal* as nothing but antipodal. His soteriology rooted in election left little rationale for a *visible* Church at all; and even when he did hint, in an Augustinian manner, that the *nominal* Church showed forth (or “made apparent” as Hodge put it) the *true* Church, he stridently maintained there could be no essential connection between them.  

The second summary point here is Hodge’s struggle to articulate any consistent identifiable markers of the *invisible* society. This *real* Church was marked by right doctrine and right living, but could not be definitively identified because we now see reality only through a glass darkly [1 Cor. 13:12] as the result of sin and its effects. When these two aspects of Hodge’s ecclesiology coalesced, they led to an inevitable and perhaps perennial question for

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806 Hodge, “Visibility of the Church (1853),” 57–58. Dodaro and Questier refer to Augustine’s Psalms commentary and *Contra Litteras Petiliani* as two places where the African Bishop used the image of a “City on a Hill,” not equated directly with the “visible” Church but visibly showed forth the invisible Church. My argument within this section on Hodge has not been focused on his direct agreement or disagreement with Augustine, but the comparison highlights the lack of nuance that Hodge employed in his unpacking of this teaching. Dodaro and Questier, “Strategies in Jacobean Polemic: The Use and Abuse of St Augustine in English Theological Controversy,” 443. This is also the most significant difference between Hodge and Calvin. The latter, as Kärkkäinen puts it, conceived of the correspondence between the visible and invisible Church in a more mutually informing manner: “Calvin considered the invisible church to be a ‘true’ church comprised of the totality of the elect before God. He also considered the visible church to be a ‘true’ church because it was the authentic instrument that manifested and initiated those elected in Christ.” Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Introduction to Ecclesiology: Ecumenical, Historical & Global Perspectives* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2002), 52. See also Eddy Van Der Borght, *The Routledge Companion to the Christian Church*, ed. Gerard Mannion and Lewis S. Mudge (Routledge, 2007), 195–96.

807 This is distinguished from the “marks” of the visible Church in the Reformed tradition. These were generally listed as the preaching of the word and the administration of the sacraments (and largely following Bucer, in some later Reformed traditions the discipline of the Church). Hodge seemed to be influenced by Turretin’s discussion of the “marks” in noting the inconsistency of their number through Reformed history and the Swiss scholastics’ reduction of them all to “purity of doctrine in conformity to the Word of God.” Bauder, “Communion of the Saints,” 186. For another summary of the “marks” in the Reformed tradition, see Van Der Borght, *The Routledge Companion to the Christian Church*, 196.
much evangelical ecclesiology: Who cares about the visible Church?\textsuperscript{808} If one can be a real Christian without the nominal Church through right belief and living, and one can be a member of the real Church, apart from the nominal Church, simply through eternal election, then, at most, the nominal Church becomes an ordinance that is somehow fitting of right doctrine and living. At worst, however, the nominal Church is easily discarded as not only irrelevant and unnecessary, but even perhaps as injurious (as a forced idolatry of sorts) to the real Church and her elected members.

**Nevin**

Nevin was not nearly as preoccupied as Hodge with the classic Reformation distinction of the visible and invisible Church. In fact, he regularly used them negatively to discredit his interlocutors, insisting that the talk of an “invisible” Church was simply an “idealistic, Gnostic abstraction.”\textsuperscript{809} And yet, despite this, Nevin’s understanding of a duality within the Church’s existence was absolutely central to his overriding ecclesiological understanding and explication. In the face of the dominant evangelical manifestations of the American antebellum period, Nevin refused to emphasize an utter distinction between the invisible (read spiritual) and visible (read institutional), as Hodge did at points.\textsuperscript{810} On the other hand, Nevin showed the same lack of patience with reformers like Campbell and Winebrenner who deliberately attempted to ignore the reality of the dual nature of the Church.\textsuperscript{811} Like Hodge, Nevin inserted two cognate terms into

\textsuperscript{808} For a brief but insightful summary of Hodge’s ecclesiology that comes to similar concluding questions, see Hart, “The Church in Evangelical Theologies, Past and Future,” 25, 33–35.

\textsuperscript{809} Nevin, Antichrist, 76.

\textsuperscript{810} Conser argues that underlying the entire debate between Hodge and Nevin was the latter’s belief that the “sectarian spirit” of the age was unable to accept the Church as “anstalt – a church complete and external.” This is perhaps too sweeping and unnuanced, neglecting the emphasis on the Church’s historical dynamism which Nevin promoted. Yet the point remains valid at its most basic level that Nevin embraced the visible nature of the Church far beyond what the typical antebellum evangelical would accept. Conser, Church and Confession, 287.

\textsuperscript{811} Gilpin sees a connection between Nevin and Campbell here in that they were both responding primarily to a revivalistic evangelicalism that denigrated the “corporate context of the Christian life” and left little room for the “church’s role in nurturing personal growth in grace.” This seems to me to be reductive, as more moderate (even anti-revivalist) evangelicals emphasized the importance of a sharp divide between the visible and invisible Church –
the discussion in order to communicate more clearly what he felt was the dual nature of the Church. After unpacking Nevin’s employment of the terms *ideal* and *actual*, this section will reiterate the importance of the historical visibility of the Church, and then finish by connecting the soteriological implications of Nevin’s ecclesial duality.

**The Ideal and the Actual**

In explicating the dual nature of the Church, Nevin leaned heavily on both his Platonic and Idealist philosophical influences. He readily admitted that the terminology of the “ideal” was employed in the very same “sense that Plato used it.” The “actual” on the other hand was

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Hodge is a case in point. Furthermore, Campbell actually showed less consternation over the populist preaching (though he was bothered by the individualistic emphasis and the lack of ecclesial formation to be sure) than he did over the speculative nature of the professional theologians. Gilpin’s point discounts the contrast of Nevin and Campbell with even the moderate evangelicals of the period who looked to places like Princeton as their lighthouse. Gilpin, “The Doctrine of the Church in the Thought of Alexander Campbell and John W. Nevin,” 418–19.

812 As has been noted previously, the works devoted to examining Nevin’s philosophical underpinnings are numerous. Mid and late 20th-century works of the likes of Nichols, DeBie, and Wentz are still worthwhile, though they have been challenged, refined, and in some cases (especially Nichols) largely overturned. Dipuccio has done the most thorough job of explaining the mix of philosophical influences that cohere in what he calls a “dynamic realist” (coined originally by Coleridge) approach to philosophy promoted by Nevin. Layman’s dissertation is extremely detailed and nuanced, outlining in greater detail the different aspects of Nevin’s philosophical outlook and how he used but never fully accepted some of the Common Sense tradition. Dipuccio and Layman have openly disagreed about the influence that Coleridge’s work had on Nevin, with the former seeming to have the upper hand in suggesting there is material evidence for significant influence.

Crain’s more recent offering adds a particular dimension that is less well-known through the lens of Nevin’s lectures on aesthetics. There is a connection here to our section, as the unpublished lectures rely heavily on the distinction between “ideal” (or idea) and “form.” Their mutually informing character, with each “overwhelming” the other, is not unlike Nevin’s description of the *ideal* and *actual* dynamic in his ecclesiology. Here Crain indicates that alongside his Platonic reliance there was an engagement with “European theoreticians of sensibility” like Burke, mixed with both Kantian and post-Kantian Idealist pieces. The proposal is intriguing and the connection with post-Kantian Idealism seems indisputable, but the Burkean affect is less obvious and relies only marginally on a philosophical borrowing. It seems to me that Nevin used Burke’s terms generously, but then reinterpreted them within his own metaphysical construction. Despite the pastiche philosophical foundation, I have found most helpful Dipuccio’s description that Platonism lurks behind (quite literally) most of Nevin’s work, even if it was primarily filtered through the Puritans. See DiPuccio, “The Dynamic Realism of Mercersburg Theology”; William DiPuccio, *The Interior Sense of Scripture: The Sacred Hermeneutics of John W. Nevin* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1998); William DiPuccio, “Nevin & Coleridge,” *The New Mercersburg Review* 17 (Spring 1995): 59–63; David Wayne Layman, “Revelation in the Praxis of the Liturgical Community: A Jewish-Christian Dialogue, with Special Reference to the Work of John Williamson Nevin and Franz Rosenzweig” (Ph.D., Temple University, 1994); David Layman, “Was Nevin Influenced by S.T. Coleridge?” *The New Mercersburg Review* 17 (Spring 1995): 54–58; T. Chris Crain, “The Beautiful, the Sublime, and the Comic: An Aesthetic Appraisal of John Williamson Nevin and the Mercersburg Theology” (Ph.D., Saint Louis University, 2003); Linden J. DeBie, “German Idealism in Protestant Orthodoxy: The Mercersburg Movement, 1840–1860” (Ph.D., McGill University (Canada), 1987); James Hastings Nichols, *Romanticism in American Theology: Nevin and Schaff at Mercersburg.* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961); Richard E. Wentz, *John Williamson Nevin: American Theologian* (New York: OUP, 1997).

813 See Nevin, “Lectures on Aesthetics,” 4-5 as found in Crain, “The Beautiful, the Sublime, and the Comic,” 86.
understood by the post-Kantian Idealists to be the unity of the idea (or ideal) and the real. The real, in this philosophical context, was not a hidden spiritual truth opposing the nominal, as it was for Hodge, but the real “was the idea circumscribed.”814 Here we see the closer connection between the terms themselves than in the traditional visible and invisible categories or Hodge’s real and nominal; the actual does not stand opposed to or even apart from the ideal, but encompasses both the ideal and its circumscribed reality.815 Nevin puts it thus,

We take Idea here in its true sense, by which it expresses the very inmost substance of that which exists, as distinguished from its simply phenomenal character in time and space. As such it is not opposed to what is actual, but constitutes rather its truth and soul. All life is Ideal, that is, exists truly in the form of possibility, before it can become actual; and it is only in the presence and power of this potential life, this invisible, mysterious living nature which lies behind and beyond all outward manifestations, that these last can ever be said to carry with them any reality whatever.”816

The terms ideal and actual were, for Nevin, two aspects of one reality, “interrelated dynamically to one another rather than standing in stationary opposition to each other.”817 “The Ideal Church,” explained Nevin, “can have no reality save under the form of the historical, and the actual or historical Church can have no truth except through the presence of the Ideal.”818 Yet despite their mutuality, Nevin was insistent that in approaching the Church as an object of reflection there was a definite order from which to proceed: moving from the ideal and only then

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814 Ibid., 100.
815 It should be noted here that Locher claims the sharp division between the visible and invisible Church was alien to the Reformers with the exception of Zwingli (and perhaps early Calvin). See especially Locher, Sign of the Advent, 14–16. He concludes, claiming, “The Church in Duality is the precise opposite of an alleged dualistic Church, to which the Reformers were, like Augustine before them, fundamentally opposed and which they sought to refute so vehemently and persistently” (14). By the arrival of the 19th century, however, they could be used as entirely unconnected entities that were even defined in opposition (re: antipodally). As with the Eucharistic claims over true Reformation heritage earlier, we must leave this question aside, yet it does appear through the limited lens of Locher that Nevin may also have a legitimate claim to a classic Reformed perspective – despite his thick Idealist accent – like Hodge.
818 Nevin, “The Church,” 64.
There is an irony here as Nevin loudly trumpeted a need for a historical consciousness that had been lost among most 19th-century Protestants, but it was thinkers like Hodge and Campbell who drew their theological conclusions about the *visible* and *invisible* Church from an honest look back through the brokenness of the *actual* Church. Put another way, Nevin wanted to firmly establish the “theory or idea” of the Church and then,

[only] when the *idea* of the Church has been first brought to some clear determination, can the way be said to be at all open for discussing either intelligibly or profitably such questions as relate only to the manner in which the idea should be, or actually may be anywhere, carried out in practice.

The historical “force and value of any institution” was of no *prima facie* value until it was properly presented through an abstracted understanding of the nature of the Church which was *anterior*. Nevin wanted to avoid, at all costs, answering the question “Where is the Church?” before unpacking “What is the Church?” The irony, however, was not simply that Hodge, Campbell, and others drew from history in constructing their ecclesiology while Nevin accused them of blind ahistoricism, but that the very *things* that Nevin so dearly implored antebellum evangelicals to rehabilitate within their churches — the materiality of traditions which arose from a proper historical consciousness — were relativized by Nevin’s predilection for the primacy of the *ideal*. In doing so, Nevin ignored the very realities that drove theologians like Hodge to the

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820 For further evidence and a related discussion about how this did and did not play out in the particulars of Nevin’s ecclesial polity, see chapter 1 section 3.
821 Nevin, “Thoughts on the Church,” 187.
822 Ibid. “Anterior” is Nevin’s own word here. This is what Nevin means when he writes, “The fundamental question is not of the sacraments, nor of a liturgy, nor of the church year, nor of ordination and apostolic succession, nor of presbyters, bishops, or popes; but, as we have said, of the nature of the Church itself, considered in its ideal character, and as an object of thought anterior to every such revelation of its presence in an outward way” (188-89).
823 “So we meet in Mr. Alexander Campbell,” writes Nevin, “many traces of a sound and right feeling here [in the doctrine of the church], which we may well regret to find overwhelmed again, and made of no effect, by the power of the unhistorical sect mind which is allowed after all to prevail in his system.” Nevin, “The Sect System: Second Article,” 530. Cf. Nevin, “True and False Protestantism,” 94.
824 This, of course, is highly contested by Nevin and Nevinites who adamantly claim that ordering reality this way is the only way to properly appreciate the inherent value and goodness of lived history and the materiality
concept of an *invisible* Church in the first place – the so very apparent fallibility and fissiparity of the institutional Church through the ages.

Nevin’s most controversial teaching on the *ideal* and *actual* aspects of the true Church was not his persistence in examining the *ideal* in isolation from its historical messiness. Rather, in what might appear to be a contradiction, Nevin’s most contentious concept was his promotion of the compulsory “externalization” of the *ideal* in the *actual* Church as a “fixed law in life.”\(^825\) That is, though Nevin swept aside the affront that an historically broken Church revealed in order to begin by examining the purity of the *ideal*, he insisted that the *ideal* “must take some outward form in order to become complete.”\(^826\) Nevin averred that the “more intensely *spiritual* any state may be, the more irresistibly urgent will ever be found its tendency to clothe itself, and make itself complete, in a suitable external form.”\(^827\) Thus, when he claimed that an “invisible state, or invisible family, or invisible man, is not so great an absurdity and contradiction as an absolutely invisible Church,” he insinuated that the Church was highly “spiritual,” but also that the “Church, in its very nature, seeks visibility, and to be complete at all, this visibility must extend to all its qualities and attributes.”\(^828\) And so we see the supernatural *nisus* – the internal

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825 Nevin, “The Church,” 60.
826 Ibid. He continues, claiming, “Pent up within itself as mere spirit, it must remain always an abstraction only, with no power whatever” (60).
827 Nevin, *The Mystical Presence: A Vindication of the Reformed or Calvinistic Doctrine of the Holy Eucharist*, 6. One wonders, as he used the incarnation as his *locus classicus*, if somehow Nevin has impinged upon the free will of the triune God by insisting upon a philosophical principle of reification. The surprising act of God becoming man would not be altogether surprising if it was merely the necessary result of a purely spiritual Being satisfying the “irresistibly urgent” need to be made material and thus historically contingent.

Just so, it is noteworthy that the Scriptural witness in affirming the Church-as-Israel does not seem to start with an abstracted “spiritual” Church that is then reified, but quite the opposite as the Church is the journeying through time of an actual people with God. This too could be affirmed solely on the witness (though it need not be) of the New Testament where Jesus chose disciples to follow him first and only then could the perpetuity of the Church – as Christ bound to *these* apostles – be understood in a “spiritual” way. These examples are given simply to raise the question as to whether Nevin’s philosophy of “dynamic realism” was as fitting scripturally as he seemed to think it was.

828 Nevin, “The Church,” 60.
perfective urge – of the *ideal* Church extended not only to a generic visible Church (whatever that might mean), but also including the Church’s requisite attributes in concrete details.\(^{829}\)

What made this “*law of embodiment or reification*”\(^{830}\) so scandalizing was that in his haste to accuse many antebellum evangelicals of holding the “assumption” that “Christ has no real Church in the world; but only an invisible spiritual Christianity,” Nevin bound the *idealized* Church to a particular externalization without adequately addressing the problem of sin.\(^{831}\)

Whereas Hodge had so cautiously warned his readers that the Church was not able to be “pointed to with the finger,” Nevin riposted that we must be able to say more than simply “The Church is here”; we must be able to definitively conclude, “This is the Church[!]”\(^{832}\) Undoubtedly Nevin (and those who follow him) would strongly argue here that much of the nuance of Nevin’s position is ignored. After all, he never glamorized the *actual* Church, even writing,

> Then, again, the historical Church must be *visible*, or in other words, not merely ideal, but actual. The actual may indeed fall short immeasurably of the idea it represents; the visible Church may be imperfect, corrupt, false to its own conception and calling; but still an actual, continuously visible Church there must always be in the world, if Christianity is to have either truth or reality in the form of a new creation. A purely invisible Church has been well denominated a *contradictio in adjecto*; since the very idea of a Church implies the manifestation of the religious life, as something social and common.\(^{833}\)

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\(^{829}\) For Nevin’s more generic usage of these philosophical concepts, especially in relation to his historicism, see chapter 1 section 2. In “world” history Nevin uses the term “nisus” to identify the frustrated urge of ungraced nature which cannot fulfill its providential actualization without the aid of the supernatural. Here, however, it is used to refer to the inner spiritual compulsion of the supernatural *ideal* of the Church itself. Cf. Nevin, “The Year 1848”; Nevin, “Natural and Supernatural.” This argument also presumes the earlier point in chapter 1 section 3 that issues of polity were not *adiaphoron* for Nevin.


\(^{831}\) Nevin, *Antichrist*, 52.

\(^{832}\) Nevin, “The Church,” 68 *punctuation mine*. The difference between Nevin’s two statements may appear insubstantial at first, but once they are grasped the distinction is evident. The first statement is something Hodge or Campbell would be comfortable with. “The Church is *here*” indicates that it may not be equivalent to the visible and experienced reality of the specific church which is bound by time and place and shaped by individual and systemic forces – for both bad and good. Saying “The Church is here” recognizes God’s enduring promise of His presence with the Bride of Christ in a *corpus permixtum*, but it does not delineate those boundaries clearly. On the contrary, the claim “This is the Church” directly equates the *actualized* Church with its *idealized* nature and suggests that, indeed, the Church *can* (and must!) be pointed to with the finger.

\(^{833}\) Nevin, *The Mystical Presence*, 4–5. Interpreters like Conser Jr. miss this when they claim, “As actual [the Church] fell short in all historic eras of the ideal, however, Nevin maintained, it did remain the depository of all the resources needed for the full redemption of humanity.” If the *actual* Church simply remained the “depository”
Yet Nevin’s recognition of the “imperfect, corrupt, and false” reality of the ideal Church, while simultaneously proclaiming “This is the Church,” appears to be no less a contradictio in adjecto than a “purely invisible Church.” Nevin’s out – so to speak – from this contradiction was an explanation that the depths of this reality were mysterious and any attempt of human reasoning to grasp this would succumb to the offence of rationalism. There only appeared to be a chasm between the ideal Church actualized in its pure form and the historical Church that was so impure through the ages. They were one and the same, but through the mystery of faith the actual was seen through the historical. However, with this explanation it is difficult to see how the actual Church could be as historically broken as Nevin espoused. In the end Nevin’s deployment of mystery appears to be a rhetorical device aimed at avoiding a more fulsome explanation of how the ideal was reified in the actual, while the actual was a broken and apparently marred representation of the ideal.

In sum, Nevin’s ideal and actual ecclesial configuration stipulated that the “outward… must bear the inward, as the body bears the soul that dwells in it,” and yet the shared body-soul

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834 On the particular way in which Nevin understands the “infallibility” and “indefectibility” of the Church, see Nevin and Erb, Dr. Nevin’s Theology, 38ff.

835 Nevin’s concern was to avoid “rationalism” and promote a “faith.” Faith in this context, however, seems quite different than hope. The former asks its adherents to trust in something that to all human faculties appears patently false, the latter creates space for honest doubt and is more reserved in its assertions of the divine economy. “The catholic Church is a mystery, in the sense of the Creed, just like its other articles, which as such is to be apprehended primarily by faith, and not in the way of intelligence… To put intelligence before faith, here as elsewhere, is just what we mean by rationalism.” Nevin, Antichrist, 86.

836 In a certain way, Nevin’s usage of mystery as a way to avoid further explanation is similar to Hodge’s usage of mystery regarding a believer’s real union with Christ, manifest in an invisible bond. There is another question that arises with Nevin’s comments on the historical brokenness of the actual Church. Once this is admitted, it is difficult to see how one could outline the shape of the ideal Church from within the context of a historically (and actually) broken Church or even how one could discern between actual ecclesial alternatives. Nevin, however, downplays the noetic effects of sin. He is relatively certain that an objective understanding of the ideal Church is accessible, despite the historically broken actual Church in which he has his membership.
analogy with Hodge should not be mistaken for theological synergy.\(^{837}\) In fact, Nevin’s overriding concern was expressed in his verdict that the “the outward and inward in the Church can never be divorced, without peril to all that is most precious in the Christian faith.”\(^{838}\) Nevin wanted to look at the one Church in two perspectives, rather than finding two churches. But as in much of their theology in general, Hodge and Nevin appeared to be emphasizing the opposing ends of a theological continuum: Hodge pushed the limits of dualism and Nevin the risk of monism. The former risked severing any and all connection between the visible and invisible Church, while the latter came awfully close to equating them outright.

**Entelechy and Salvation**

Nevin’s Platonism and Idealism had limits. History was not an “emanation” of divine life or the movement of the *geist* through time.\(^{839}\) Still, the value that Nevin placed on history and the historical process seemed inestimable: “No higher wrong” could be done to the Church, he dramatically proclaimed, “than to call into question its true historical character,” thereby turning the true Church into nothing but a “phantasm.”\(^{840}\) Nevin’s worry was not only that the historical Church might be turned into a phantasm, but that its organic development or dialectical unfolding would also be made to be “mechanical,” with no natural continuity with what came before.\(^{841}\) There was the dual concern for Nevin of making the “externalized” Church either

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\(^{837}\) Nevin, “The Church,” 68.


\(^{839}\) Nevin, “Brownson’s Review Again,” 314. Here Nevin is defending himself against the more generic accusation of “pantheism.” He concludes his apology with a less than clear theological distinction: “God is complete without [creation], and lives with absolute fulness [sic] beyond it in the way of personal self-consciousness and freedom… But still in such free view, we have a right to speak of history as the actual presence not-withstanding of his life, as the very form in which he reveals himself so as to show forth in an actual way the sense of what this life contains… We see no pantheism in this.”


\(^{841}\) For the mix of Romanticism and Idealism in Nevin’s historical outlook, see Payne, “Schaff and Nevin, Colleagues at Mercersburg”; Layman, “Revelation in the Praxis of the Liturgical Community,” 128ff. The point here is that Nevin would have accepted either a Hegelian *aufhebung* (sublation) or a Romanticist development view of Church history, but saw neither at work among most American antebellum evangelicals.
“fantastic or false” – invisible or visibly inconsonant through the ages.⁸⁴² Since Nevin’s understanding of the history of the Church as an organic development or entelechy has been outlined in chapter 1 (section 2), the following will only pick up on its implications for a diachronic look at the ideal and actual Church.

Ecclesial entelechy meant, for Nevin, that the ideal Church was actualized continuously, visibly, and organically.⁸⁴³ He knew well the prevalent evangelical theories which proposed a “chasm” in the visibility of the true Church through history like a “phantom ship, appearing and disappearing, at long intervals”⁸⁴⁴ or the notion that not long after its beginning, the Roman Catholic Church fell into a millennial sleep under the power of Satan and the “heretics” carried forth the visible true Church.⁸⁴⁶ And though he admitted that the visible Church could, indeed, be

⁸⁴² Nevin, The Mystical Presence, 5. In his second Cyprian article he calls this the Church fathers’ aversion to the “magical or merely mechanical”: Nevin, “Cyprian.” 383.

⁸⁴³ Nevin mocks the Hodge-like evangelicals who put so much stock in the invisible Church but seemed to make it largely impotent: “The ‘invisible’ unity, we are told, is something deeper and stronger, than the denominational lines and landmarks that challenge the eye of sense. But if it be so, why should it not have force to make itself visible?” Nevin, Antichrist, 76. The ideal, for Nevin, always had the potentiality within itself to be actualized in history. The terrestrial, claimed Nevin, always has its “root and force” in the celestial: Nevin, “Cyprian,” 353. The question arises, however, about what to do with what was actually going on in antebellum America. How could Nevin affirm so confidently that this potentiality was being realized concretely in history, while at the same time witnessing rapid fragmentation among the antebellum evangelicals and very little tangible evidence of this reification? Nevin lamented that evangelical Protestantism seemed to be devolving (see for example The Anxious Bench (1844), Pseudo-Protestantism (1845), Antichrist (1848), False Protestantism (1849), Puritanism and the Creed (1849), The Sect System (1849)) and yet his theory of organic development suggested that just the opposite had to be happening.

Nevin’s attempt at a rationale regarding his view of “American theology” – that he would “be glad to see [it] fairly wiped away” – was that it was part of the developing “no” of Protestantism that would be rejected at Christianity’s next dialectical advancement. It shows his conflation of both an organic development view of history and a Hegelian dialectic one. As history advanced in a cycle of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis, it both retained and rejected certain aspects at each convulsion. Nevin was certain that this version of evangelicalism was the slag to be burned off in the next developmental thrust of Christian progress (ie, the synthesis of Roman Catholics and Protestantism): Nevin, “True and False Protestantism,” 86. This seems to be best exemplified in his lack of reaction to the withdrawal of the (more revivalistic) North Carolina classis from the German Reformed Church in response to his publication of The Anxious Bench. See John B. Frantz, “Revivalism in the German Reformed Church in America to 1850, with Emphasis on the Eastern Synod” (Ph.D., University of Pennsylvania, 1961), 226.

⁸⁴⁴ Nevin, “The Church,” 70.

⁸⁴⁵ Nevin, “True and False Protestantism,” 92.

⁸⁴⁶ The amount of material and the colourful language that Nevin used to review and discount these two theories, which were sometimes separate and sometimes used in tandem by antebellum evangelicals, is overwhelming. For the “gap theory” where the visible Church came and went, see Nevin, Antichrist, 54ff; Nevin, “True and False Protestantism”; Nevin, “The Sect System.”
thought to have apostatized, it could not “involve the dissolution of the church itself.” Rather, and here is where Nevin became increasingly accused of “Romanism,” there must be a steady and visible ontogeny of the Church that was first from within and then out of the “Roman or Papal Church.” There was no rupture or even sharp change in direction between the pre- and post-Reformation Church, but the Protestant Church was the proper actual outgrowth of the Roman hierarchy. Nevin summed his theory up this way:

The Church must exist as the BODY of CHRIST objectively and permanently, in the world, under the form of history: not here to-day and gone to-morrow; but always here, according to Christ’s own solemn promise: not in the way of dead, monotonous tradition; but in the way of a true organic life process, reaching forward continually, through all ages, to its full proper consummation at the end of the world.

This explication of the ideal and the actual Church through history had significant soteriological implications. In fact, this was the accusation that Nevin made against Hodge as he contended that the Princetonian’s overdeveloped distinction between the visible and invisible Church “[converted] its whole being into a shadow, which, while it seems to promise much, means at last literally nothing for the process of man’s salvation.” The invisible Church was composed ineluctably through eternal election, and the visible was mere outward play-acting.

For the “ecclesial alternative” theory where the “Waldenses, Albigenses, Henricians, [and] Paulicians” formed the lineage of the true visible Church because the Roman Catholic Church was in “perpetual captivity to the Devil,” see Nevin, “Early Christianity,” 1851, especially 522; Nevin, “True and False Protestantism,” 92ff. In his autobiographical series of articles about his younger years, Nevin admits that because of the teaching he received at Princeton, he too fully accepted the theory of the “devil’s millenium [sic]” before the dawn of the Reformation: Nevin, “My Own Life,” April 6, 1870.

847 Nevin, “True and False Protestantism,” 92. It was always self-correcting in a dialectical manner according to Nevin. “The fact that the Church has unfolded and preserved herself down to the present time is a much stronger argument in her favor than the mere success of the Gospel. She has developed herself organically, and her form is the result of some spirit. We see that spirit manifesting itself everywhere, even among corruptions.” Nevin and Erb, Dr. Nevin’s Theology, 36–37.

848 Nevin, “True and False Protestantism,” 91.

849 See especially Nevin, “The Anglican Crisis.”

850 Nevin, Antichrist, 54–55.

851 Nevin, “Hodge on Ephesians,” 68. Carrying on, Nevin unpacks his critique further, writing, “But the invisible Church of this dualistic theory… adds nothing to the conception of Christianity… It is at best the comprehension only of the ‘elect,’ whose salvation is a fact already secured under quite another aspect and view, and who thus brings with them in their character of saints all that is made to belong to them in its communion” (69).
meaning that, in reality, according to Nevin, “no outward historical Church, no real sacraments, [and] no objective worship” were necessary.\(^{852}\) Conversely the “real Church,” in Nevin’s soteriological estimation, was the “continued presence of the same divine life, or new creation, that was originally introduced into the world by the incarnation of Jesus Christ.”\(^{853}\) The actual Church, in sum, was the eternal life-giving body of Christ, without which there could be no salvation. For baptism into Christ, as entry into the Church, was the divine instrument that bound the believer to Christ himself.\(^{854}\) Thus, claimed Nevin, “It is a deplorable mistake for an individual to live outside the life of the Church.”\(^{855}\) Indeed, he maintained, “If a man breaks off from all historical connection with the Church, he becomes a mere dead link.”\(^{856}\) Nevin affirmed this salvific understanding of the Church in the strongest possible terms by repeating the

\(^{852}\) Nevin, *Antichrist*, 59. These two things – election and sacraments – were continually pitted against each other by Nevin: “Doctrine of the Reformed Church on the Lord’s Supper,” *The Mercersburg Review* 2 (1850): 421–548; “Hodge on Ephesians”; “Hodge on Ephesians: Second Article.” Nichols notes that this was the impetus for Nevin to move away from Calvin and toward Melanchthon (and Ursinus, one would also assume): Nevin, “The Church,” 99. Evans concludes, “[After 1848, Nevin] pits Calvin’s sacramental theology against Calvin’s predestinarianism, and he trumpets the distinctive identity of the German Reformed tradition as Calvinian on the sacraments and Melanchthonian on the decrees.” Whether Evans is equating Nevin with the oft-repeated critique of Melanchthon’s soteriology as synergism is unclear, but it is certainly implied in the way he frames the discussion: Evans, *Imputation and Impartation*, 174. For support of Evans’ conclusion, see Thompson, *Essays on the Heidelberg Catechism*, 69ff. Of interest here is Schaff’s book published in the year of Nevin’s death, which identifies Melanchthon as “the Reformer”: Philip Schaff, *Saint Augustin, Melanchthon, Neander: Three Biographies* (London: Nisbet & Co., 1886).

\(^{853}\) Nevin, *Antichrist*, 54.

\(^{854}\) In Nevin’s expanded explanation, he concludes, “Baptism places its infant subject in a saving relation to the new supernatural constitution which Christ has established in the Church; makes it possible for it to grow up, with natural development, into the form of a truly christian life, under the direct action of the resources which are comprised in the Church for this purpose.” Nevin, “Educational Religion - No. 4,” *Weekly Messenger of the German Reformed Church* 12 (July 14, 1847): 2461. Nevin often prefers to reverse the order of agency to distinguish himself from revivalist alternatives: moving from the individual binding themselves to Christ through baptism and being received into membership in the Church, to “It must come to us, out of the bosom of the Church herself! She makes us christians, in this sense, by the sacrament of holy Baptism, which she has always held to be of supernatural force for this very purpose.” Ibid. This article was part of a series of four that reviewed Horace Bushnell’s famous *Christian Nurture*: Horace Bushnell, *Discourses on Christian Nurture* (Boston, MA: Sabbath School Society, 1847). See also Nevin, “Educational Religion - No. 1,” *Weekly Messenger of the German Reformed Church* 12 (June 23, 1847); “Educational Religion - No. 2,” *Weekly Messenger of the German Reformed Church* 12 (June 30, 1847); Nevin, “Educational Religion - No. 3,” *Weekly Messenger of the German Reformed Church* 12 (July 7, 1847).

\(^{855}\) Nevin and Erb, *Dr. Nevin’s Theology*, 36.

\(^{856}\) Ibid.
Cyprianic formula: *extra ecclesiam nulla salus.* What is “needed” for salvation is “here really and truly at hand under a supernatural form.”

**Conclusion of Nevin’s Ideal and Actual Church**

The Church’s transposition from *ideal* to *actual* was a struggle for the *true* Church to live into its full “form.” Yet within this organic development, the “constitution” of the Church remained “above nature, a sacrament, a Divine mystery.” The Church was “thus an organ and a medium of grace in a real way, whose office it is, not simply to proclaim salvation, but with supernatural power also, to bring it actually to pass.” In all this, Nevin was so focused on reflecting theologically on the Church as such that the institutional character of the Church seems to assume a life of her own, entirely divorced from her members. The stress placed on the unicity of the Church – with no separated visible and invisible entities – leaves one wondering how much sense it makes to speak of a *corpus permixtum* or an *invisibilis compago* in Nevin’s ecclesiology. Furthermore, in Nevin’s collective reflections on that Church’s salvific self-embodiment, he seems unaware that his insistences might indicate a much more “magical” or “mechanical” soteriology than he would have been comfortable espousing.

**Campbell**

Paul Blowers, in his brief comparison of Nevin and Campbell’s ecclesiologies, concludes that despite their shared concern for the unity of the Church, they diverged sharply on what unity meant and how it might be accomplished. “Visible as well as invisible unity,” he attributes to Nevin, “was imperative for the church; but only the living Christ, mystically indwelling his

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857 Nevin, “Cyprian,” 371. He actually quotes him as saying, “No salvation out of the Church (extra ecclesiam salus nulla).” Or again later in the article: “No salvation out of the church; full possibility of salvation in the church, because there, and there only, the supernatural grace required for this end was, by Divine constitution, exhibited and made present for the obedient use of faith in an actual and real way.” Ibid., 375.

858 Ibid., 371.

859 Nevin and Erb, *Dr. Nevin’s Theology,* 34–35.


861 Ibid., 376. 382.

862 See Nevin, “Cyprian,” 353.
body, could sustain that visible unity.” This kind of unity, on the other hand, “could not be peeled off the pages of the New Testament or engineered by human reason” as was Campbell’s approach, insinuates Blowers. The connection here is helpful as it places Campbell in the proper context when it comes to discussions of the visible and invisible Church: ecclesial (dis)unity. Campbell showed only disdain for what he felt were speculative discussions about the invisibility of the Church; yet, viewed through the lens of Church unity, Campbell clearly had a strong sense of some difference between the visible and invisible Church which must be explored further. Because in places Campbell is difficult to follow and lacks consistency on this topic, the following analysis will begin with a clarifying summary and then unpack how Campbell arrives at these conclusions. From this sketch of Campbell’s often meandering logic on the visibility of the Church, the section will move to the roots of his strong aversion to the category of the invisible Church, then unpack his particular description of a corpus permixtum, finally tying it back to his larger ecclesiological concerns.

The Mixed Body: An Opening Conclusion

According to Campbell, if there was such a thing as a corpus permixtum, it was not marked by the hidden elect, bound together by an invisible ring, existing alongside those who were to be eternally damned as they awaited the eschatological gleaning. Instead it existed because there were those who were tending toward the restoration of the pure Church alongside the obstinate accommodationists, both together in the reprobate Church. There were Christians and non-Christians who existed side by side, visible to all, within the divided Church. Just so, there was more visibility in this scattered condition than in Hodge’s invisible (hidden or

863 Blowers, “Restoring the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church: The Appeal of the Declaration and Address as Interpreted by Frederick Doyle Kershner and William Robinson,” 365.

864 Campbell’s most extended interlocutor in his work on baptism was “Dr. [Samuel] Miller,” who was Hodge’s long-time colleague and mentor at Princeton. At one point in the work, Campbell interrupts a quote from Miller distinguishing the visible Church from the invisible by questioning “Who ever saw an invisible church?” The point is not unlike Nevin’s accusation of a contradictio in adjecto aimed at the Princeton cohort in general and Hodge in specific. Campbell, Christian Baptism, 323.
unknowable) Church, and in reality less triumphalism than in Nevin’s *actual* Church, though Campbell’s project was actively and optimistically working toward reestablishing that visible bond. Instead, Campbell’s concept was a mixed body – in the singular – though that *body* was the Church in a fragmented way.865

This fragmented body was not to be left alone in such a deformed manner, however. This mixed nature and shattered whole, maintained Campbell, ought to start sorting itself out in real time. It was a part of the task of the Christians to unite on minimal, acceptable, divine platforms (not human traditions) in order to re-establish the visible Church as a pure Church in order to carry forth its mission in the world.866 “We sincerely regret,” confessed a penitential Campbell, that the church, owing to Protestant partyism, has been so crippled as to have lost much of her converting, salutary, and redeeming power in the world; but we prefer to restore the church to her ancient dignity, rather than to attempt to reform the world without her.867

865 This aligns fully with his father’s foundational document for the movement written in 1809: Campbell, *Declaration and Address of the Christian Association of Washington.* Upon the Declaration and Address’s 200th anniversary, Doug Foster wrote a concise paraphrase that drives home the connection in Thomas Campbell’s conclusion: “The nature of these propositions is a call — a call to all followers of Christ today to be what Christ wants us to be. Christ’s church does not reflect the reality of the one body. We have not maintained the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. It is easy to be complacent about our divisions because they seem to work. Yet the fractured nature of the body is a scandal — it hinders the world from believing, it dissipates the efforts of Christians to serve, and distracts believers from their own spiritual development. We are impelled to say these things. We have heard again the admonition from Isaiah 57:14 — ‘Remove every obstruction from my people’s way.’ It is the sincere intention of these propositions and of the essays that follow to bring to the attention of Christians fundamental truths and first principles that will lead us toward a permanent unity. How far that goal is reached now remains with the readers.” Douglas A. Foster, *One Church: A Bicentennial Celebration of Thomas Campbell’s Declaration & Address,* ed. Glenn Thomas Carson, Douglas A. Foster, and Clinton J Holloway (Abilene, TX: Leafwood Publishers, 2008), 45. For Alexander’s exuberant reception and agreement with the Declaration and Address, see Wrather, *Alexander Campbell*, 2005, 114ff.

866 Without question part of the distinction between Campbell and Hodge here has to do with the former’s rejection of some tenets of Calvinism. Though Campbell retained a strong view of the depravity of humankind, he also took part in the so-called *arminianization* of American Protestant theology led by the New School Presbyterians and the New Haven Theology of Nathaniel William Taylor’s Yale. As Harrison puts it, Campbell was comfortable claiming, “The instrumental and meritorious causes of salvation are God’s will and gracious acts in Jesus Christ. Nothing the individual does can earn this grace. But to receive the benefits, the individual must concur with, agree to, accept, that which is offered.” Harrison Jr., “Nailed to the Church Door: How Protestant Was Alexander Campbell’s Reform?” 50–51. The *active* part of Campbell’s soteriological understanding extended to the life of faith, where Campbell was certain that only those who visibly engaged in the mission of the Church for the world could be called Christians. Thus, through the obedience and agency of Christians, the Church could begin to sort itself out and restore its original purity – there was no quietistic waiting upon the Lord.

Campbell implores his readers through the Scriptural figure of a “whole burnt offering” to sacrifice “all our ‘empty and deceitful philosophy,’ – our ‘science, falsely so called,’ – and our traditions received from our fathers” in order for the “whole burnt offering” to become “the most acceptable peace offering… on the altar of the Prince of Peace.” We must “repudiate,” insisted Campbell, all “human philosophy, and human traditions” as having any place in the Church’s “faith, worship, or morality.”

We know nothing of an invisible church

As outlined in the summary above, it seems evident that Campbell held to some understanding of an invisible Church, but part of what makes unpacking his thinking on this topic so challenging is his adamant rejection of such an idea. “There is, indeed, with many,” claimed Campbell, “a fondly cherished idea, rather a forlorn hope, that Christ has, at this time, an ‘invisible church,’ composed of members of all those rival institutions.” As Campbell protested, this idea of a visible and invisible Church is a “philosophical distinction” that has been “excogitated” by theologians and which he can “neither… affirm or [sic] deny” – though Campbell certainly spilled a lot of ink doing just that sort of denying.

In his monumental The Christian System, Campbell pens an extended section on “Heresy.” Campbell was insistent on a direct semantic correlation between heresy and schism: both terms, he maintained, had to do with sects. With this background laid, it is easier to

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868 Campbell, Christianity Restored, 128.
871 This “speculation” is not alone, but sits within a catenae of nearly forty “doctrines” which are dismissed because of their extra-biblical language: Campbell, The Christian System, 129–30.
872 Ibid., chapter XXVIII: 99-108.
873 For a summary and a direct equation of the New Testament terms schism and heresy, see ibid., 108. Nevin also makes this same equation (though he says they are “parallel”) between schism and heresy. See Nevin, “Cyprian,” 421. The Bethany reformer described the semantic range of the New Testament usage of schism as follows: “[Schism] denotes division or alienation – not on account of faith, doctrines, or opinions – but on account of men as leaders or chiefs among the brethren. It is a division as respects internal union, or the union of heart and affection, only tending to a breach of visible or outward union, and therefore reprobated by the Apostle.” Campbell, The Christian System, 99. Describing the range of heresy, he writes, “Hairesis, strictly and literally indicative of
understand Campbell’s strong reaction later in the chapter when he writes: “There are [those] who think that no party is the church of Christ, but that [Christ] has a church in all parties – an invisible church – to which they think themselves to belong.” But Campbell simply does not buy such a plea to an invisible church that crosses denominational boundaries without disturbing their outward distinctions. Instead, he claimed, there was simply “a great mass of sectaries [who] are following, as they imagine, Jesus Christ and his Apostles, under the name and tenets of Luther, Calvin, Wesley, &c.” These “sectaries” are not a part of the invisible Church, but “without knowing it, the mere followers of men.”

There are two relevant things to note from this section of *The Christian System*. The first is Campbell’s understanding of schism and heresy not as doctrinal divergence, but as distracted or divided loyalty that reached toward “a breach of visible or outward union.” The second is that, in Campbell’s view, the idea of an “invisible church” was simply an attempt to legitimize those divided loyalties that had resulted in visible breaches of communion. Just so, Campbell affirmed that there could be no “followers of men” who held a deeper and hidden *internal union* because the apparent visible disunion necessarily meant the *internal union* had previously been compromised. He did not deny, in other words, the reality of both an internal and an outward

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*choice or option, is anglicised heresy, and properly rendered sect or faction.* Later in the section he concludes, “[In] its scriptural application, whether used by Luke, Paul, or Peter… it never relates to doctrine, tenet, opinion, or faith. There is not, in sacred usage, any tenet, or doctrine which is called heresy or sect.” Ibid., 100, 102.

874 Campbell, *The Christian System*, 105-06.

875 Ibid., 106.

876 Ibid.

877 Ibid., chapter XXVIII. This is filled out at greater length and in much more detail throughout the section.

878 See Sprinkle, *Disciples and Theology*, 8. Campbell and his father both looked to the visible Church for its unity, rather than beginning with the invisible. For this foundational difference between Campbell and Stone, see George Richard Phillips, “Differences in the Theological and Philosophical Backgrounds of Alexander Campbell and Barton W. Stone and Resulting Differences of Thrust in Their Theological Formulations” (Ph.D., Vanderbilt University, 1968), 15–16.
(invisible and visible) union, but he saw it as a logical fallacy to claim that an outwardly divided Church could exist alongside a perfect internal unity.\textsuperscript{879}

It is with this understanding as that he could boldly endorse others who demurred from the visible/invisible distinction:

But as to an invisible Christianity – an invisible kingdom – an invisible church, there is, and, in the nature of things, there can be no such thing. The distinction has been made without authority, and has contributed not a little to embarrass a subject otherwise sufficiently plain, simple, and definitive.\textsuperscript{880}

Or, he could promote the baselessness of an invisible Church himself, claiming:

There is but one real Kingdom of Christ in the world, and that is equivalent to affirming that there is but one Church of Christ in the world. As to an invisible church in a visible world, schoolmen may debate about it till doom’s day, but we know nothing of an invisible church in our portion of creation.\textsuperscript{881}

The context of ecclesial unity, however, must be kept in view, as Campbell was really saying that he knew nothing of a bifurcated Church where the visible reality of division is somehow at odds with its unified invisible reality. As Sprinkle concludes, “[dualistic] models that divided the reality of the church into ‘visible’ and ‘invisible’ manifestations seemed patently absurd to him.”\textsuperscript{882} Campbell looked through the visible (disunited) Church to test the “internal union,” and when he did so he concluded that the

three grand schisms in Christendom are as clearly marked as the mountains, and seas, and lakes, and rivers, that separate the nations of the earth. The Greek Church, the Roman Church, and Protestantdom [sic], with its hundred sects, all attest that Christendom, in its grand aggregate, is generally apostate… And, therefore, some of the most sensitive professors have cherished, and do cherish this hope… it is of no essential importance to what community they belong, provided only they belong to this elect invisible church.

\textsuperscript{879} Adding to the confusion was Campbell’s belief that there could be “outward” union simultaneously with “inward” disunion. He assumed this state would not last long until the internal “breach in hearts of people” was manifest in “visible disunion or heresy.” This is how Campbell made sense of the early Church. Campbell, The Christian System, 100.

\textsuperscript{880} Campbell, “Mr. Meredith on Faith, Baptism, and Remission,” The Millennial Harbinger, New Series, VII (1843): 254. Excerpt from Meredith’s Biblical Recorder, which Campbell endorses and from which he prints sections he agrees with.

\textsuperscript{881} Campbell, “Periodical Conventions,” 106.

This is the grand and specious excuse of multitudes professing Christianity, for continuing in whatever community they may happen to have been born in.\textsuperscript{883}

Campbell’s primary aversion to a doctrine of the invisible Church was his belief that it had sanctioned Christians to call what is false, true; what is evil, good; and ultimately, what is divided, united. The aggregated or universal Church was, in Campbell’s own words, “generally apostate” because of its visible division; and to ignore that schismatic reality was to obfuscate the nature and the mission of the Church.\textsuperscript{884}

\textit{Visible: Hidden or Scattered}

So how was one to describe the reality of the Church? It might be expected that Campbell would promote his nascent community as the true visible Church without remainder.\textsuperscript{885} Yet he scoffs at the embarrassment of such a parochial idea and condemns others who hold to anything so narrow-minded.\textsuperscript{886} But if the \textit{true} Church was not wholly invisible and it was not equated with

\textsuperscript{883} Campbell, “Elementary Views - No. 1,” 362.

\textsuperscript{884} Cf. Campbell, \textit{Christianity Restored}, 101–28. “Was there at any time,” asks Campbell rhetorically, “or is there now, in all the earth, a kingdom more convulsed by internal broils and dissensions, than what is commonly called the church of Jesus Christ!” (101).

\textsuperscript{885} Again here we encounter a disconnect between Campbell and the generations who followed. The Stone-Campbell Movement was known to hold as one of its main tenets the mantra “We are Christians only, but not the only Christians.” Terry Miethe, “Slogans,” ed. Douglas A. Foster et al., \textit{The Encyclopedia of the Stone-Campbell Movement} (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004). However, this credo was, very early in the movement’s history, drowned out by a perfectionistic impulse that led to a legalistic framework which excluded all forms of the ecclesial other and \textit{de facto} made the churches act as if, indeed, they were the only true Christians. While this section will show just how tragic that type of exclusivity would have seemed (and was) to Campbell himself, it will also attempt to display the beginnings of its logic in Campbell’s own belief in the purity of the Church. Campbell, in other words, attempted to hold a broad church position on doctrine, but a puritanical position on obedience and morality, which led his progeny in two rather divergent ways when they struggled to hold the two in tension. By the turn of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century, it became evident that the “churches of Christ” had adhered closest to Campbell’s understanding of the need for a pure Church, while those who eventually came to be known as the “Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)” held fast to Campbell’s teaching on the generous limits of doctrinal orthodoxy for the purpose of visible ecclesial unity. For a similar assessment, see Richard T. Hughes, “The Role of Theology in the Nineteenth Century Division of Disciples of Christ,” in \textit{American Religion: 1974 Proceedings: Preprinted Papers for the Group on American Religion} (Tallahassee: The Academy, 1974). While Hughes uses the categories of “restitution” and “unity” rather than “purity” and “inclusivity,” his argument follows a parallel track and in many instances the terms could be used interchangeably. My only critique is that his terms are, in my opinion, unnecessarily narrow.

\textsuperscript{886} See for instance Campbell, \textit{The Christian System}, 105; Campbell, “Any Christians Among the Sects?” 566. This view is ultimately what the famous “Lunenburg Letter” controversy set out to dispel, as Campbell defended his comments about cooperating with “Christians” found in other ecclesial bodies. The letter, from a “sister” in Lunenburg, challenged such a notion and Campbell was forced to respond in three essays that generated a small firestorm of controversy within the movement: Campbell, “Any Christians Among Protestant Parties”; Campbell, “Christians Among the Sects”; Campbell, “Any Christians Among the Sects?” It should be noted that
Campbell’s own swelling movement of Disciples, then how was it demarcated? Like Hodge and Nevin, it will be helpful to explore the answer diachronically.

When Campbell looked back into ecclesiastical history, he did so with a confusing mix of rationalism and skepticism. On the one hand, he was a typical Baconian Common Sense Realist who could assent plainly, as he did in his debate with the agnostic Socialist Robert Owen, to the optimistic formula: “wherever there is perfect consistency and accordance between the fact reported, and the testimony adduced to prove it, conviction of the verity of that fact necessarily follows.”887 Again, “facts” were simply things said or done, and they were irrefutable if they were testified to faithfully.888 Yet Campbell had a skeptical side that has rarely been mentioned by scholars.889 In this skeptical vein Campbell comes off sounding more like a late modern (postmodern?) historian “from below” that questions the validity of sources written by the systemic “powers” and gives preferential treatment to the marginalized through history.890 And it

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887 Robert Owen and Alexander Campbell, Debate on the Evidences of Christianity: Containing an Examination of the Social System (London: Groombridge, 1839), 168.

888 “History” announces Campbell, “has to do with facts”: Campbell, The Christian System, 18. And “Fact means something done”: ibid., 114. Fact and Truth, however, are not synonymous in the same way that Fact and Deed are: “All facts are truths, but not all truths are facts.” The prime example, of course, is the truth of the existence of God – it is undeniably true according to Campbell, but not something said or done. Campbell, Christianity Restored, 106-07. On the place of testimony in the writing of history, see Richardson, “Alexander Campbell’s Use of History in His Apologetical Theology,” 83ff.

889 It is surprising that secondary sources which pick up Campbell’s view of history and especially his debate with Purcell have not attempted to unpack the logic of some of Campbell’s dramatic statements. Miller even mentions aspects of Campbell’s skeptical response to Purcell, but passes over them quickly with an explanation about Campbell’s self-justification. This is not untrue, certainly, but it plays into a larger line of reasoning that Miller seems unaware of or part of a tangent he is not willing to pursue. Herbert Dean Miller, “Enacting Theology, Americanism, and Friendship: The 1837 Debate on Roman Catholicism between Alexander Campbell and Bishop John Purcell” (Ph.D., University of Dayton, 2015), 120–23.

890 In a pert response to Purcell about which groups remained orthodox amidst the early Church’s contestation for orthodoxy, Campbell replies, “The gentleman [Purcell] has given you his definition of orthodoxy and heterodoxy: my definition is – the strong party is the orthodox, and the weak party is the heterodox.” Campbell and Purcell, A Debate on the Roman Catholic Religion, 66. Campbell’s point is that the labels, as such, were applied by the winners of the disputes; and so to make an evaluative judgment from sources produced by those winners, so to speak, would be a perpetuation of injustice. In the same year as the debate, Campbell wrote an article in the MH titled “Notes of Apostacy,” where he raised the concerns more explicitly and at greater length. For instance, he writes, “It is, upon the whole, questionable whether, if all the volumes extant on church affairs were placed in the hands of a Hume, or a Gibbon; or of a person of equal or superior historic talents, a full and perfect history of our
was, in fact, this skeptical historical disposition that allowed Campbell to trace a skein of movements through time that formed an alternative ecclesiastical history, apart from the Roman Catholic Church: from the Novatians to the Puritans, passing through the Luciferians, Aerians, Donatists, Paulicians, Waldensians, Albigenses, Wycliffian Lollards, and sundry 16\textsuperscript{th}-century Reformers.\textsuperscript{891}

Campbell’s search for the Church through time seemed to be, in other words, a case in point for the “ecclesial alternative” that Nevin had so boisterously condemned.\textsuperscript{892} However, religion from the beginning could be elicited. Of this we are indeed extremely dubious; because in the most controversial periods of church history there were no disinterested or accomplished neutrals to write a true and faithful history; and the feelings and rival interests of partisan [sic] actors in that great drama wholly disqualified them for such a work. Then, in the less controversial ages of Christianity, the profligacy and corruptions of the reigning party could not be faithfully laid before their contemporaries, and consequently have never been transmitted to posterity.” Campbell, “Notes of Apostacy,” The Millennial Harbinger, New Series, I (1837): 16. It should be noted that unlike much of the postmodern history “from below,” Campbell still leaves the possibility of a historian “representing a thing just as it is, or was, without a single alteration or variation,” but such an account is the “rarest talent in the world” and impossible when the “feelings of the individual are enlisted on the one side or the other of the subject of the story!” (16). At the beginning of the article Campbell laments, “It is much to be regretted that there is yet one immense blank in the literature of the age; on a subject, too, of transcendent importance; which, at this time appears to be irremediable. We have no standard, no authentic history of Christianity” (15).

\textsuperscript{891} Campbell and Purcell, A Debate on the Roman Catholic Religion, 66–69. He lists them all in the debate and then summarizes by saying they were all “Protestants” (68). Cf. Campbell, “Notes of Apostacy”; Weedman, “History as Authority in Alexander Campbell’s 1837 Debate with Bishop Purcell,” 25. The date of the apostasy of the Church is likely surprising, as one might presume Campbell would have asserted there was instant apostasy after the death of the final Apostle – a sort of immediate degeneracy – or, perhaps, with the baptism of Empire after Constantine’s edict in the fourth century. Yet the choice of the Novatian Controversy is deliberate in its focus on the purity of the Church (65). The irony that Campbell valorized Novatian while Nevin wrote a four-part series on Cyprian (150+ pages), largely hagiographical in nature, lies at the heart of this section. Just to confuse the issue further, Campbell believed that the Roman Catholic Church did not begin until the mutual anathemas of 1054. This, he believed, was when the Roman Church definitively (and corruptively) put forth the idea that the Pope was the universal father of Christendom. Thus, when the Church fell during the Novatian crisis, it was not technically the Roman Catholic Church. Campbell and Purcell, A Debate on the Roman Catholic Religion, 40.

\textsuperscript{892} Campbell describes the effort as finding “an unbroken series of Protestants – a regular succession of those who protested against the corruptions of the Roman church, and endeavored to hold fast the faith once delivered to the saints, from the first schism in the year 250, A.D. to the present day; and you may apply to them what description or designation you please.” Campbell and Purcell, A Debate on the Roman Catholic Religion, 77. By the late 19\textsuperscript{th} century this type of self-legitimizing genealogy was standard practice among evangelicals, resulting in a famous three-volume series of lectures titled The Evangelical Succession, published by some of the leading churchmen of the day: The Evangelical Succession. A Course of Lectures Delivered in St. George’s Free Church, 3 vols. (Edinburgh: MacNiven & Wallace, 1882). This series focused much more on major orthodox thinkers (Augustine, Columba, Anselm, Luther, Calvin, etc.) than Campbell’s thread. The tradition of “proto-Protestant” hunting was initiated largely with Foxe in the 16\textsuperscript{th} century: John Foxe, Actes and Monuments, First English Edition (London: John Day, 1563). For an excellent survey on this topic covering the 16\textsuperscript{th}, 17\textsuperscript{th}, and 18\textsuperscript{th} centuries, see S. J. Barnett, “Where Was Your Church before Luther? Claims for the Antiquity of Protestantism Examined,” Church History 68, no. 1 (1999): 14–41. It is difficult to assess where Campbell was truly original in his own historical construction – certainly the employment of the latter groups (Paulicians, Waldensians, Albigenses, Wycliffian
Campbell’s revisionism was more deliberate and less sweeping than might be assumed. It was not merely a desperate attempt to find a visible Church by rehabilitating radical (“heterodox”) thinkers and their followers as the legitimate movement of the Spirit through the history of the world. Rather, Campbell chose carefully from those outsider groups that he felt met two criteria: first, they had to be visibly forced from the Catholic Church – “separated rather than separatists,” as he referred to his own movement; and second, they had to have a fervidness for the purity of the Church. In other words, they could not be schismatics; and moreover, simply by their expulsion from the Catholic Church, they showed the latter to be schismatical by nature.

The anti-establishment history that Campbell concocted relied on his understanding that ecclesial division was the result of “a controversy about the purity of communion and discipline, Lollards, etc.) was standard fare – but the earlier groups of Donatists, Luciferians, and Aerians seem to be quite atypical in this genre at the time. One might assume that their inclusion is intended to highlight the aspect of ecclesial “purity” that Campbell himself is insistent upon as will be shown below.

Pertinent to the antebellum era, the Landmark Baptists were the most involved in generating elaborate genealogies of their own church that they could connect directly to the first “Baptist” himself: John the Baptist. The most notable would be Graves in his Old Landmarkism work (chapter 10) where he demurs from the full challenge, writing, “I have no space to devote to the historical argument to prove the continuity of the kingdom of Christ, but assure the reader that, in our opinion, it is irrefragable” (126-27). He then continues on to cite a dozen “experts” who connect the 19th-century Baptists to a remarkable number of historical groups within the history of the Church (127-130). James Robinson Graves, Old Landmarkism: What Is It? (Memphis, TN: Baptist Book House; Graves, Mahaffy & Co., 1880). The Landmark Movement was one of, if not the most disruptive of, the Baptist controversies of the antebellum era, with Graves helping to initiate the movement in the 50s. The only other controversy of such magnitude was Campbell’s own among the Baptists. In a further ironic twist, it was (arguably) the Campbellite controversy that incited the Landmark Movement itself. Lefever calls it the attempted “vaccine to inoculate Baptists against Campbellite influence.” As found in Fred Moritz, The Landmark Controversy: A Study in Baptist History and Polity (Maranatha Baptist Press, 2013).

Miller conjectures that one of the reasons that Bishop Purcell and Campbell stayed friends after the debate and spoke so highly of each other was their shared theological vision that the Church must be a visible society. Purcell saw something different in Campbell than he did in many of the other evangelicals of the antebellum period when it came to the visibility of the Church. The assertion is not explicitly attributable, but does not seem out of the question. Miller, “Enacting Theology, Americanism, and Friendship,” 209.

Campbell, “Reformers Not Schismatics,” 146.

The legitimacy of Campbell’s historical revisionism in itself and his evaluative criteria are beyond the bounds of this study, but suffice it to say that even he seemed to be aware that not all the groups were “forced out” of the fold and that often their predilection for purity pushed them away. See Campbell, “Notes of Apostacy.”

For Campbell’s take on the sin of schism, see Campbell, “Reformers Not Schismatics.”
rather than about articles of doctrine.” Campbell’s purity argument had, at its core, a belief that the impure were followers of men who were distracted by cultural accommodation and charismatic leaders who supplanted the primacy of Christ and the simplicity of the Petrine confession. The alternative ecclesial history, however, was not the true visible Church through embodied time, but the activity of true Christians who were attempting to reform the institutional Church by uniting on the proper foundation of the “divine institution.” Once the unity of the Church had been restored, built from its proper foundation, then – and only then – would the visible Church that had been reprobate since the mid-3rd century be restored. This is how Campbell arrived at his (admittedly convoluted and inconsistent) understanding of a *corpus permixtum*, where there were reformers tending toward the restoration of the pure Church side by side with the followers of men, both visible in the one reprobate Church.

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897 Campbell and Purcell, *A Debate on the Roman Catholic Religion*, 65. This is not to say that Campbell naively assumed “doctrine” had no role to play in the disputes, but that ultimately they were about human pride and not matters of substantial theological difference. In one of his more dramatic examples, he writes, “And I need not tell you that there is a peculiar rancor or inveteracy in all domestic quarrels, especially among brothers and cousins, which exaggerates every thing [sic] and exquisitely embitters the feelings, so that often pure hatred for love’s sake is the only offering acceptable to the genius of these family misunderstandings, which are always violent in the inverse ratio of the value of the points at issue. Hence we often witness a more respectful and obliging intercourse between a Papist and a Protestant, than between two Protestant brothers that only differ about a single shade of opinion not more important than the difference between a pea-green and a sea-green leaf.” Campbell, “Letters to England,” 273.

898 Campbell writes, “As a historic fact of some importance, we would here emphatically observe, that if Christianity was persecuted by its enemies, it was corrupted by its friends. The enemies of the Cross sorely vexed the Christians; but the Christians, without intending it, grievously perplexed the religion.” Campbell, “Notes of Apostacy,” 17. See the full article for his sustained argument against the accommodation of the Church “to the prejudices and capriciousness of the times,” which “thus inadvertently vitiated its character, obscured its glory, and weakened its influence upon the world” (18). With reference to section 1.3 where the argument was made that in adiaphorous matters the Church ought to use expediency as her guide, Campbell does not contradict that here, writing, “Still, however, it is expedient to accommodate one’s self to the prejudices of society in matters of indifference in order to do them good. The delicate point, therefore, is to know how far the accommodation may be carried” (18).


900 Here I largely agree with Gilpin when he concludes that Campbell’s “reform… called upon the invisible church of scattered ‘Christians among the sects’ to recover its character as a visible ‘community of communities’”: Gilpin, “The Doctrine of the Church in the Thought of Alexander Campbell and John W. Nevin,” 426. However, I do not think it is accurate to use the loaded phrase “invisible church” to describe Campbell’s understanding of a visibly broken Church that included true Christians. Beyond the fact that Campbell would certainly have rejected the phrase himself is the reality that it misrepresents his understanding of a reprobate Church in search of inward and outward unity.
With his diachronic understanding of the Church outlined, Campbell’s entire ecclesial project comes into clearer view. The singularity of the Church – not parsed in dualistic fashion – emerged as an essential piece of Campbell’s ecclesial puzzle even if there was an internal (hearts and minds) and external (material and social) unity involved. “Jesus was constituted,” Campbell reminded his readers, as “‘head over all things for the church, which is his body’ [Eph. 1:22-23] – not his churches nor his bodies. Again: he loved the church, and gave himself for it [Eph. 5:25].”

The Church’s present state of brokenness allowed Campbell to work on two fronts. First, his ecclesial movement for unity insisted that Christians who were content to remain within their schismatic churches, justifying their divided state by promoting a doctrine of the invisible Church, was entirely unacceptable. Second, at the same time, his Disciples were called upon to “co-operate… with all Christians… whether or not they belong to our churches.” There was no invisible Church, there were not even any hidden Christians, but there were scattered Christians among the sects that would, Campbell assumed, upon grasping the purity of the gospel, tend away from the heresy of following humanly manufactured bonds of unity and unite fully on the foundation of the divine institution, eventually piecing back together the unity of the Church.

The argument, after all, is a highly pragmatic one driven by Campbell’s need to find a

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901 Campbell, “Periodical Conventions,” 106. In the context, Campbell’s purposes in using both Ephesians passages was to reiterate the singularity of the Church.

902 Campbell, “Letters to England,” 272. Here Campbell is not ready to include non-Protestants, claiming, “we find in all Protestant parties Christians as exemplary as ourselves according to their and our relative knowledge and opportunities; but we cannot form a confederacy with the troops of Satan, or tax his subjects to sustain the Christian cause” (272-73). Earlier, however, he was insistent not to “paganize” the “Greek and Roman communions” either, complaining that in one fell swoop other Protestants would “eject one hundred millions [sic] of members” from the Church: Campbell, Christianity Restored, 101.

903 As explored further in section 1.2, it is an interesting question as to whether or not this can properly be understood as an eschatological reality for Campbell. His optimism clearly indicates that he felt this restoration was not only possible, but tangibly underway in his movement and that it would be completed for the purpose of the evangelization of the world. In this way, only the conversion of the world could be properly considered of the last things, yet there are places (see section 1.2) where Campbell seems ready to admit that this final unity will only be complete upon the return of Christ at the Second Coming. For his strongest suggestion that it will precede the eschaton, see Campbell, Christianity Restored, 104, and Christians Among the Sects? where he claims, “I calculate the day is not far distant when many of them [other Protestant groups] will unite with us” (566).
motivating rationale for uniting the Church – an invisible Church does just the opposite, or so Campbell assumed.

**Conclusion: Arrested Evangelism**

Despite his repeated rejection of the distinction between a visible and invisible Church, Campbell clearly had an understanding that the *true* Church was composed of members who were scattered across the denominations. There was a sort of crude *corpus permixtum* at work in his ecclesiological reflection on the unity of the Church, which in fact did imply some sort of *invisibilis compago*. This mixed state, however, was not a license for Campbell to allow things to remain as is, awaiting the eschatological sorting of the wheat from the chaff; rather, Campbell used the *scattered* state of the one, broken, and reprobate Church to motivate and impel the *true* disciples of Christ to reconstruct the ark of salvation board by board from its original divine blueprint. After all, and perhaps most importantly, a broken Church was an arrested one, its mission hindered or even halted, because of its impurity and lack of visible unity.

**Conclusion**

This look at the way in which representative evangelical theologians of the 19th century understood and explicated the *visibility* and *invisibility* of the Church brings to the fore several points on which to conclude this section. First, despite using the categories of the *visible* and *invisible*, this section has shown in what distinct theological directions these denominators were taken. If the contrast between Hodge and Nevin was one of dualism and monism, respectively, then the risk of theological overstatement between Campbell and Nevin was “reductionism” and “triumphalism.”

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904 These terms are placed in quotations because, although they are standard theological terms, I am borrowing them directly in the manner that Yeago uses them in his article on Luther’s ecclesiology: Yeago, “Ecclesia Sancta, Ecclesia Peccatrix,” 352–53. While Nevin “failed to come to terms with the observable reality of the crowd of sinners” that made up the Church, Campbell allowed “the church to be no more than the sum of its frail and sinful parts.”
brought into particular relief within this section. Nevin’s strong insistence that the *actual* Church was the very embodiment of salvation was contrasted by Hodge’s avowal that the *visible* Church was not essentially connected to an individual’s salvation. Campbell’s preoccupation with the restoral of the one unified (visible) Church, on the other hand, began within the history of reforming groups who were expelled from the institutional church, and was driven by his desire to rehabilitate the evangelistic mission of the Church. For Nevin, the (*actual*) Church was the bearer of salvation, for Hodge the (*real*) Church was the result of salvation, and for Campbell the (*true*) Church’s restoral would lead to the world’s salvation. Third, the understanding of history, and God’s role in history, has been tangential in almost every section; but in this section, it was more explicit and the results of the interpretive differences between Hodge, Nevin, and Campbell were evident. I have attempted to challenge the obvious conclusions by suggesting that despite Nevin’s extensive historical excursions, he presents an overly idealized picture of the Church through time. Conversely, even though Hodge and Campbell invest less in historical reflection *per se*, their realism forced them to wrestle with how to uphold the truth of ecclesial sin and fallibility with the promises of God to be with his Church to the end of time. The difference within their historical understandings impinged directly on their doctrines of the Church and her members.
Chapter 3:

Section 1
An Evangelical Ecclesiological Typology

What is presented below are “empirically grounded types” that have been constructed by rigorous “empirical analysis” and “combined with theoretical knowledge.” In this case, the types have been constructed using “prototypes” which have remained an integral part of the type designation. Rather than dismissing the prototype’s designation in favour of a purely abstracted label (ie. Missional, Conventional, Retrieval), the prototypes have been joined to the more hypothetical “Ideal” description to retain the 19th-century roots that form the meat of this project: Campbell-Missional (C-M), Hodge-Conventional (H-C), and Nevin-Retrieval (N-R). This is not to claim that the 19th-century prototypes are exhaustive of the types themselves, but they help situate the claim of this work: What arose in antebellum evangelical theology, at least in ecclesiology, continues to be manifest in a generalized way in the 21st century. These are not types of ecclesiology in general, but specific broadly-Reformed evangelical types that solidified in a specific American era and continue to mark evangelical thought in the contemporary era.

Before we move on to outline the types themselves, a brief apology for and explanation of the typology is in order. A significant impetus for this project is to contrast the tired tropes and unsophisticated reductionisms that have often been used to classify, and even typify, evangelical ecclesiology. These would include crude taxonomies such as “high-low,” “liturgical-non-liturgical,” “episcopal-presbyterian-congregational,” “primitive-confessional-catholic,” and even “formal-casual.” In these ad hoc categorizations, the generalizations often do more to obscure reality then elucidate. In short, the argument is that these oft-used categories suffer from a lack of

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substantial theological examination and are often parsed using ancillary or cosmetic differences. The sustained and inductive theological examination above has been geared toward avoiding the clichés and ready-at-hand simplistic variances that have been more representative of the caricatures of evangelical ecclesiology than reality. The five pools of exploration in the chapters above (Bible, Millennium, Structure/Authority, Constitution, and Visibility) have afforded the opportunity to dive deep theologically and not simply skim the surface. Inductive historical work surpasses the formulas often employed to construe evangelical ecclesiology because it shows the different planes of understanding at work. One brief example will illustrate this difference before we move on to the creation of the types. When inquiring how these prototypical thinkers understand the Bible, we cannot simply plot them on a binary or a graded scale, as they would all crowd around the “high view of Scripture” pole. This, inevitably, provides little in the way of explanatory or predictive power. Furthermore, if the inquiry digs deeper, asking how such a “high” view of Scripture fed into their ecclesiology, it would be clear that Campbell and Hodge would still be camped together on the end of the continuum that reads “substantially.” It is only with detailed historical analysis that the proper question can be asked: “How does their high view of Scripture inform their understanding of the Church?” Here we have found that Campbell’s patternistic usage is not simply primitive, nor is Hodge’s principled approach captured by the label confessional. In each case, the partial truth ends up putting the emphasis on the wrong theological syllable, and the ecclesiological pronouncement is unrecognizable.

Darrell Hart, in a historical survey of evangelical ecclesiology mentioning both Hodge and Nevin, bemoans the lack of attention the topic has received and the resultant cacophony of opinions. He likens the task of describing evangelical ecclesiology to “the problem the king’s

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906 Hart quotes the 20th-century evangelical Baptist historian Bruce Shelley, who wrote, “It should be a source of deep concern to evangelicals that, while professing faith in an infallible Bible, they have produced so few
men confronted in the fallen Humpty Dumpty”; and he wonders whether “evangelicalism’s many idiosyncrasies [can] be cobbled together again into a coherent ecclesiology?” The answer is implied in his questions: No. One of the underlying arguments of this dissertation is just this point, that there is no such thing as an evangelical ecclesiology. So, historians have erred in trying to categorize evangelical ecclesiology under only one type. There are areas of shared concern, theological affinity, and even practical commonality – they are all self-confessedly evangelical, after all – but they are indubitably three distinct types. And yet, there is clearly something not-Catholic, even anti-Catholic, that does create a certain via negativa coherence among the types. The original employment of evangelical, with regard to churches in the Reformation era, was ostensibly intended to emphasize the gospel, in reality it was a way of not so subtly saying, “Not Catholic.” From at least the antebellum era forward, in its flurry of disestablishment and democratization, American evangelicals have gone a step further by broadening this via negativa to include any ecclesial manifestation that is considered an “institution” rather than a “religious movement.” Thus, evangelical Episcopalians and Lutherans often sit in an uncomfortable place – once the self-professed evangelicals of the Reformation era, now no longer evangelical enough – too institutional – for their suspicious peers. So apparent in the Bible Riots and even in the reaction to 9/11, this via negativa evangelical identity must be kept in mind through this contemporary examination that follows.

As was noted in the introduction, part of why these prototypes were chosen was the way in which these thinkers have occasionally been plotted along a hypothetical continuum. Some worthy books on the Biblical doctrine of the church.” Hart then suggests that such realities “help explain why the phrase evangelical ecclesiology inevitably invites chuckles.” Hart, “The Church in Evangelical Theologies, Past and Future,” 39.

Ibid., 25.

have construed antebellum ecclesiology to range from Campbell (low) to Nevin (high), with Hodge often being treated as the consummate moderate. Hatch uses Campbell and Nevin as the opposites of antebellum evangelical expression; and Patterson employs them as figures of the theological extremes; and even Gilpin uses their ecclesiologies as foils, though the latter is far more nuanced and appreciative of their shared perspectives than most.\(^\text{909}\) This work has problematized this implicit linear typology. There is no one-dimensionally conceived, low-medium-high evangelical ecclesiology, and certainly the recurrent default prototypes of Campbell, Hodge, and Nevin are vastly inappropriate choices for such a construal.\(^\text{910}\)

Rather than plotting two types on the fringes of an evangelical spectrum, I think that it is far more representative to envision three spheres that border each other without overlap – a sort of Venn diagram where the circles only meet tangentially, without the usual overlay.\(^\text{911}\) There are two benefits to such a configuration. First, this non-linear construal is helpful to eschew the often default, and frequently unconscious, categorization of evangelical ecclesiology into ordinal types of low-to-high Church manifestations. This scaled reading of antebellum evangelical ecclesiology is reductionist and void of the rich explanatory and predictive power that a more empirically grounded type can offer. The second reason, related to the first, is to show how each type shares a border with the other two types. One type is not the polar opposite of another type, with the third type suspended somewhere around the equator. Though these types are constructed via a mutually exclusive combination of attributes, creating a strong “external heterogeneity” (there is no blending or typological hybrids), yet the pyramid of circles allows, even implies, that

\(^{909}\) See Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity*, 65; Patterson, “The Church in History,” 1800ff Kindle Location; Gilpin, “The Doctrine of the Church in the Thought of Alexander Campbell and John W. Nevin.”

\(^{910}\) For a contemporary example that analyzes all three thinkers, see Douglas Wilson, *Reformed* is Not Enough: Recovering the Objectivity of the Covenant (Moscow, ID: Canon Press, 2003), chapter 5.

\(^{911}\) See Appendix B for a simplistic diagram.
concrete manifestations of each type will find themselves at a place within the type-circle that is closer to one of the other two types. This accounts for some of the variety within the types themselves and makes sense of shared language and theological accent across type-borders. The sections below will sketch out the contours of the three types of evangelical ecclesiology. This outline will then be put to the test in the following section, where three contemporary evangelical movements will be examined to test the theory that these 19th-century types have 21st-century correlates.

**Campbell-Missional Type**

If the eruption of the term “missional” had not occurred in the past two decades, this type would likely have been labelled something like Campbell-Activist. Nonetheless, the now commonly used cognate of the missionary is an apt designation for this type. Not only does it carry the activist connotation that is central to the type, but it also insinuates the participation in a definite *mission*, rather than simply being busy. The C-M type is far less concerned with ecclesiology as an abstract discipline, wanting to prioritize missiology. That said, its coherence across a wide spectrum of thinkers is notably consistent and consistently distinct from the other two types.

The Church of the New Testament is a perfect model, not because it had all its structural and organizational pieces in place, but because it embodied the *sent* character of the Church on mission. Therefore, members of this type have read and applied the Bible in a patternistic manner, to emulate the dynamic character of the early Church. Despite different employments among some missional advocates, the Bible has still fed into the C-M type in a manner remarkably similar to how Campbell himself understood the nature and use of Scripture in the

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912 For an excellent dissertation that works to move Campbell from a predominantly *primitivist* context to a missionary one, see James L. Gorman, “Transatlantic Evangelical Missions Culture and the Rise of the Campbell Movement” (Ph.D., Baylor University, 2015).
antebellum era. There are three shared emphases on Scripture within this type that undergird its
ecclesiology: a pronounced preference for the New Testament in ecclesiological construction, an
understanding of Scripture as a patterned touchstone for the contemporary Church, and a belief
that the Church is the sign, witness, and foretaste of God’s unfolding economy.913

There is a combined belief in the imminent collapse of Western Christendom,
perpetuating in large part the anti-Catholicism represented by Campbell in the 19th century, and
the prominence of the Kingdom of God in the narrative of Scripture. This has pushed the
proleptic vision of the Church to the foreground of the C-M type, despite less emphasis on the
millennium as an object of ecclesiological attention in the contemporary setting. The Church is
helping to bring about the full reign of the Kingdom, despite institutional Christendom crumbling
all around. It is an ecclesial grass-roots movement aimed at introducing the Kingdom of God
from the ground up – a sort of shalom coup.

The structural outlook of the C-M type is not unlike the H-C one in its liberal
designation of adiaphora. There is a great deal of diversity among members of the type, but
unlike the H-C type, the overlapping consensus is not on the spiritual and soteriological priority
of the individual, but instead the practical doing of Church over and against the being of the
Church. The actual structure of the Church is measured by its usefulness to the lived vocation of
the Church en masse. The actual organization of the Church is semper reformanda, despite the
touchstone of the New Testament providing patterns of authority and structure that must always
be appropriately contextualized.

913 It reflects in part what Derek Tidball has called a “models of permission” approach to ecclesiology that
recontextualizes “New Testament patterns” of polity and leadership Derek Tidball, Ministry by the Book: New
Testament Patterns for Pastoral Leadership (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009). See Hastings, Missional
God, Missional Church, 366 Kindle Location.
Perhaps the largest diversity among this type is the differing emphases on the Christological and pneumatological aspects of the missio Dei. For some, the missio Dei is uniquely a charge to the Church as the body of Christ, enlivened by the Spirit. For others, the missio Dei is the more expansive work of the Spirit beyond the Church with the Christological constitution of the Church needing to meet the Spirit’s activity in a kind of Trinitarian synergy. Either way, the Church is effectively on mission only when it is enlivened by the Spirit’s work in the world. There is little reflection on the constitution of the Church in abstraction and the repeated refrain is that the Church ought to do the work of the Son and the Spirit by being the agent of change in the world.

There is, within this type, an ardent rejection of the true Church being invisible. There are not two churches, only one visible Church; yet there is no denying that the one visible Church is not visibly one at all. This visible fragmentation is troubling primarily because the broken state has impeded the mission that is its sine qua non. Skeptical of any theological proposal that smacked of speculative metaphysics, this type simply refuses to conceptualize an invisible Church. This reluctance, merged with a certain pragmatism, creates a formula where the visibly broken Church is never a fully effective agent of the mission until its visible divisions are mended. The theme of unity is found in varying degrees in the type overall. The crucial piece to retain here, however, is the shared insistence upon the visible character of the Church on mission as it seeks to live out its calling in the day-to-day errand of Word and Deed ministry.

Being co-opted by God’s work of reconciliation, the Church patterns itself after the New Testament communities that met the spiritual and physical needs of their world. Embracing a post-Christendom age, this type offers a nimble and light polity that adapts to its surroundings as it reaches out, working toward the healing of shalom. The visible Church, in all its brokenness, remains the body of Christ enlivened by the Spirit – the preeminent place of God’s dynamic work in the world.
Hodge-Conventional Type

Within a broad argument partly focused on offering a more variegated picture of the spectrum of evangelicals, it may seem strange to label a single ecclesiological type “Conventional.” And yet it is not a stretch to say that this type inhabits a sort of default understanding of evangelical ecclesiology, even among those who have studied evangelical theology in some depth. When most people talk of “evangelical ecclesiology,” they are often referring to this type. A case in point is Hart’s conclusion of the marks of evangelical ecclesiology in general: “In sum, this overview reveals the evangelical proclivity for personal piety over its corporate alternatives, for egalitarians over hierarchical structures, and for divine immediacy over human mediation in the experience and reception of grace.” These marks are constitutive of Hodge and those who align closely to him; therefore, descriptively, it is fitting to designate this type Conventional.

The Bible is not about the Church per se, but it addresses the who and how of the gospel of salvation. The Bible communicates doctrines that are then applied devotionally to the reader’s life. When it comes to finding the Church in the Bible, the H-C type demurs from overly developed doctrines. The foci of salvation and piety are individual in expression, and the Church is always a corollary. Nothing can be essential to the Church that is not first essential to the salvation of individuals as taught and applied in the Bible. Just so, members of this type find “principles” that help guide ecclesial decisions and lay a foundation for specific churches. The parity of the clergy, representation of the laity, and the unity of the Church are not fully developed doctrines from Scripture, but they provide boundaries within which the structure of the Church is to work. These broad laws for the Church, extracted from the Bible, rule out certain ecclesial options, not the least of which is Roman Catholicism, but they give very little

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914 Hart, “The Church in Evangelical Theologies, Past and Future,” 25. Even Hart’s further conclusion aligns well: “At best, the church is a site for the inspiration and fellowship of those really saved” (29).
constructive insight into how the Church should be organized. Some members of the H-C type will find more express commands for the Church in Scripture, but those will always be secondary to the thrust of the doctrine and devotion of personal salvation.

Hodge’s near silence on the topic of the millennium spoke volumes. His desire to avoid end-times speculation and his dogged refusal to speak of the Church inducing the millennium led to a pronounced dualism. The primary concern of this type regarding eschatological issues is the overly realized eschatology of the other types. For the H-Cs, the Church floats above history on a spiritual plane, untouched by the material vicissitudes of history, which are unable to induce any aspect of the spiritual eschaton. There is great variety in this type, with amillennials, historic premillennials, and even dispensational premillennials; however, they share the same concern that an overly-realized eschatology places too much emphasis on the material and historical aspects of the Church and diminishes the spiritualized plan of salvation for individual believers.

The structure and organization of the Church must begin with a controlling presupposition: The Church is an aggregate of individuals. There is no Church that exists apart from individual Christians as Roman Catholics and others contend. Organization is important, but the outward structure of the Church is ultimately adiaphorous. This distinction is highlighted in an understanding of the sacraments as tools for teaching spiritual truths to individuals so their faith can blossom. The ethereal thing signified in the ordinance is emphasized, while the physical emblems are dismissed, having no vital connection to Christ, again underscoring the dualism and spiritualized individualism of the plan of salvation. Not only can sacramental acts be dislocated from their communal context, but the cognitive aspects overrule the mystery of the acts.

Christ as the Head of the Church is a seemingly ubiquitous theme among this type. However, this is a highly representational arrangement, with the Holy Spirit doing the heavy
lifting by inhabiting individual believers and then only subsequently binding them together. The Church rhetorically appears to be Christocentric to the core, yet upon further exploration the pneumatological individualism leads to a very anthropocentric understanding of the Church. It is a collection of those persons who have been internally, invisibly, individually inhabited by the Spirit. Accordingly, the Church is born at Pentecost when the Spirit descends after Christ has ascended in flesh to the Father, to remain until He returns. Any dynamism within the Church is found here, in the activity of the Spirit. Still, however, it is generated not by the Spirit guiding and moving the Church, but in the inspiration of Church members who have been elected, called, justified, and sanctified.

The true Church is not visible but marked out by the election and salvation of individuals – who embody a spiritual body through their previous union with Christ. This is the clearest lens through which to see the non-instrumentality of the Church in the gospel plan of salvation for the H-C type. The Church, in its invisible state, is the essential result of the plan of salvation for individuals; thus, the visible Church plays no active role in redemption beyond providing a pedagogical and pietistic community for her members. Hodge’s historical inconsistency – what I called his problem of correspondence – need not be entirely replicated by others in this type, but some form of the gap theory or alternative ecclesial heritage (or a combination of both) is endemic to members.

_Those who are united to Christ in salvation are then inescapably made members of the Church. The Church, bound in the Spirit with Christ as its representational Head, is a non-hierarchical school of spiritual formation. The visible Church teaches doctrine and engenders piety, while the invisible, and ultimately true, Church is tucked safe in the recesses of God’s elective will. Construing the Church in this manner aspires to safeguard God’s sovereignty by decoupling the spiritual reality from the material messiness of the Church’s history._
Nevin-Retrieval Type

This evangelical ecclesiological type is concerned with the inherent inadequacies of the other two types. Nevin was perhaps the greatest “insider” critic of 19th-century evangelical ecclesiology, and that spirit has remained within the ideal type. Those who inhabit this type are aware of how thin the Church can become in a H-C model because of the emphasis on personal piety and individualistic soteriology. They are also often the first to point out the malnourished doctrinal teaching of the C-M type when their activism drowns out their understanding of what God they are partnering with. Their response, however, is not to cross the Tiber, but to retain their evangelical credentials, including an ongoing version of anti-Catholicism, while offering an altogether different ecclesiological alternative.

This type is not purely a reaction to Missional or Conventional ecclesiology – or Roman Catholicism for that matter. It is marked by several major constructive moves. First, it wrestles with history and the tradition(s) of the Church in sustained and substantial ways. Scripture is not intentionally diminished, but members of this type will always use a confessional or traditional framework, through which the Bible informs their ecclesiology. They are concerned with the oversimplification of how the Bible has informed the ecclesiology of the other types and believe that by emphasizing the communal context of the Scriptures – the Bible as the Scriptures of the Church – some of the ecclesial fragmentation that has marked evangelicalism would be avoided. *Sola Scriptura* is not abandoned, but the hyper-individualistic manner in which it has been brandished by certain evangelicals is an embarrassment to this type.

Through a shared concern for history, the N-Rs have understood the story of Scripture, as it is manifest in the Church, as one of progress and providence. In steering clear of the potential error of some C-M thinkers who emphasize the agency of the Church, the N-Rists stress the divinely ordained direction of history. This type promotes a history of the world that is moving
unmistakably toward the eschatological reign of Christ. It is in the truest sense postmillennial, asserting that Christ will return once the Church has grown into its full stature. The corollary of this insistence is also the emphasis on a paradox of already-not-yet in the form of a medial or interim time. The Church is in her adolescence, never divorced from her younger self, not yet fully grown, but on the way to her complete materialization in history.

The structure and authority of the Church is driven by theological factors, not pragmatic ones. That being said, the N-Rists promote no jure divino Biblicism. By purposefully avoiding an expedience or jure divino model, N-Rists redirect conversations of structure and authority away from ecclesial polity and toward the nature of the Church. There is a purposeful vagueness to the details of how the Church is to be organized, because empty traditionalism built from formalized structures, often what they accuse Roman Catholicism of, is as dangerous as dualistic spiritualization, according to members of this type. Some representatives of this type are comfortable with limited hierarchy, while many prefer a more democratic approach. In the end, what the Church looks like externally is not as important as emphasizing its divine constitution and how this reality is made real and concrete in the communal aspects of the body of Christ. Here the sacramental character of the Church, a mysterious object of faith, is the macrocosm of the individual sacraments themselves.

Each ecclesial type has one key aspect that takes prominence in their understanding of the Church. For the N-Rs, that aspect is the constitution of the Church and its equation or near-equation with the incarnate Christ. Nevin used the strongest possible language to assert that the Church is an extension of the incarnation, but the exact equation is not necessary to underscore the theological insistence. The claim that the Church began in Christ’s own incarnate existence and thereby in a substantial manner can be referred to as the Body of Christ is principal for this
type. The “constitution” of the Church in Christ is not metaphorical or even representational, but material in the union of Christ and those who belong to His body. It is appropriate then, according to members of this type, to speak of the Church as an object of faith – “We believe in one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church.” The divine constitution of the Church is not only Christological, it is also pneumatological. The Spirit is tied closely to the Christological shape of the Church and works to emphasize the soteriological force of being born into the Church through baptism. The Church is a type of the ark, where the boat is the body of Christ and the Spirit upholds it through the waters of baptism and into the divine realm.

Finally, the visibility of the Church is crucial to the N-R type. The primary concern is to avoid the gnostic tendencies of many evangelicals who have attempted to shirk the necessity of any visible aspects of the Church. The platonic move that Nevin made in using actual and ideal terminology to describe the visibility of the Church is not the only way to explicate this unique viewpoint, but it highlights the emphasis on the one Church in two perspectives. The Church is not an invisible entity, but neither is it fully revealed in history in this medial age. The true Church is a progressively unveiled reality that is the concrete actualization of salvation in history. This type seeks to recover and reinstitute the early, medieval, and Reformational life of the Church – an exercise in retrieval.

The pronounced emphasis on the visible and corporate character of the Church is a byproduct of understanding the Church as the “whole Christ” through history. The Church materially joined to Christ – Head and Body – by the Spirit, means that there must be an organic development that is visibly apparent. Just so, historical precedence (or tradition) must be retrieved and interpreted alongside Scripture, helping to navigate ecclesiastical polity.
Section 2
To the 21st Century and Beyond

In sum, the central difference that continues to separate evangelicals and Catholics is not Scripture, justification by faith, the pope, Mary, the sacraments, or clerical celibacy – though the central difference is reflected in differences on these matters – but the nature of the church.915

In chapter 5 of “Reformed” is Not Enough, Wilson cites Hodge, Nevin, and Campbell, showing that the 19th-century figureheads or prototypes of this typology are not entirely forgotten in the 21st century.916 The point below, however, is not to “find” Hodge, Nevin, and Campbell within the contemporary instantiations of the types that bear their prototypical name. Instead, these 19th-century thinkers have been used to provide an entry into ecclesiological exploration among 21st-century evangelicals. Why do some evangelicals who use the term “missional” fall in the H-C type rather than the C-M? Or, more broadly, why are there such different modes of engagement in socio-cultural concerns among evangelicals who sound so similar? Or how does an ecclesiological typology help underscore the different contexts and usages of “the gospel” in the evangelical world? Or, what does it mean that for all their differences, they perpetuate the 19th-century anti-Catholicism alongside their evangelical identity? The list can and does go on, and the test cases below only provide a handful of these explanatory and predictive elements. The goal of this work is not to exhaust these explanatory outcomes, but simply to tease out some of the integral ones and leave a framework in place for further exploration.

21st Century Typological Representatives
This final section will explore the ecclesiology of the following three evangelical movements that have arisen almost entirely in the 21st century: the Missional Church, The Gospel Coalition, and the Federal Vision. These three evangelical alternatives will be introduced with the idea that they understand themselves to be doing something ecclesially new (or

915 Mark A. Noll and Carolyn Nystrom, Is the Reformation Over?: An Evangelical Assessment of Contemporary Roman Catholicism (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2008), 237.
916 Wilson, “Reformed” is Not Enough, chapter 5.
reimagined) on some level in this post-Christian, 21st-century context. For the FV, the “new” thing proposed in response to the post-9/11 context is a return to a “mere Christendom” or “micro-Christendom.” The post-9/11 context led TGC to re-evaluate “evil” and how the early Reformers and early 18th-century evangelicals had addressed such issues. Finally, for the missional church movement, the shock of 9/11 brought to the fore the need for the model of community and practical ecclesiology often found in the early church, not a retreat to doctrine. The question remains whether what is being suggested in these three offerings are new ecclesiological alternatives at all? It is difficult to make a claim to being novel or reimagined when the ecclesiological proposals fit so tidily in a type that has been constructed entirely from 19th-century thinkers. Are not the ecclesial moves of 21st-century evangelicals not simply rewarmed 19th-century expressions of the Church?

Before beginning an examination of three contemporary evangelical movements and their ecclesiological understandings, the parameters must be limited. First, this chapter is not primarily evaluative in nature. The thesis that nothing is new under the sun (at least in these limited examples of evangelical ecclesiology) is not a de facto indictment against the proposals on offer. Criticisms will be made and questions raised, but the intent is not to dismiss them outright simply because they fall within the typology built from 19th-century thinkers. And second, the

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point here is not to offer a traceable, unbroken lineage of the 19th-century ecclesiological types to certain 21st-century theological great-grandchildren.\footnote{Plenty of works hint at such a genetic connection between some characters in chapters 1 and 2 and the evangelicals under examination here in chapter 3. Yet they can only be cited in passing here, as a suggestion of where one might begin such a monumental study. For several foundational works, see J. Michael Utzinger, \textit{Yet Saints Their Watch Are Keeping: Fundamentalists, Modernists, and the Development of Evangelical Ecclesiology, 1887-1937} (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2006); William Vance Trollinger and Douglas Jacobsen, eds., \textit{Re-Forming the Center: American Protestantism, 1900 to the Present} (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998); George M. Marsden, \textit{The Evangelical Mind and the New School Presbyterian Experience: A Case Study of Thought and Theology in Nineteenth-Century America} (New Haven, 1970); George M. Marsden, \textit{Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism} (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991).}

**Campbell-Missional Ecclesiology in the 21st century**

In 1998 the seminal work of the movement was published, \textit{Missional Church: A Vision For the Sending of the Church in North America}.\footnote{Darrell L. Guder \textit{et al.}, \textit{Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America} (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998).} Some have noted that in the last two decades the movement has traversed all the way “from obscurity to banality” because of the proliferation and indiscriminate usage of \textit{missional}, linguistically modifying everything from seminary programs to denominational structures.\footnote{Alan Roxburgh is credited with articulating the journey of missional “from obscurity to banality.” See Van Gelder and Zscheile, \textit{The Missional Church in Perspective}, 1. What seems to have happened is exactly what missionary-bishop Stephen Neill warned against in his 1958 Duff Lectures: “If everything is mission, then nothing is mission” (sometimes this statement has mistakenly been attributed to missiologist David Bosch). The lectures were republished as Stephen Neill, \textit{Creative Tension} (London: Edinburgh House, 1959).} Others, however, have noted that there is a convergence or at least a widespread agreement within theological circles as to what a missional ecclesiology entails. The theological tenets of the \textit{missional church} have gradually sharpened, even as a certain “elasticity” remains within the breadth of the ecclesiology itself.\footnote{Guder’s Foreword speaks of this “mutually constructive theological conversation” that veers closely to a growing convergence: Alan Hirsch and Tim Catchim, \textit{The Permanent Revolution: Apostolic Imagination and Practice for the 21st Century Church} (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2012), xv. Van Gelder and Zscheile employ the term “elasticity” when referring to the loose coherence of ecclesiological opinions: \textit{The Missional Church in Perspective}, 3.} At its core, the MC has aimed to present an alternative community of belonging and purpose in what they view as a culture that seems to have lost its way in a post-Christian context. The following section will confirm the ongoing C-M ecclesiological type within the 21st century. The connection between Campbell and the MC is made theoretically, not historically, largely
because the historical roots of the missional church are a work that “remains largely undone, even after [more than] a decade of [the] missional church conversation.”

Bible

Contemporary missional thinkers are quick to emphasize the origin of the Church in the New Testament. For most, the emphasis on the New Testament is rooted in a theological assertion that the founding of the Church is essential to understanding its enduring nature, function, and purpose. First, the New Testament Church is the divinely intended model. Second, the New Testament Church remains the criterion for contemporary ecclesiology, particularly its loosely affiliated communitarian form that was opposed to the Empire.

David Fitch talks of the “pattern throughout the New Testament” in the practices of the Church and how they can be continually employed through a recontextualization. This type of patternism that looks forward, not back, is what chapters 1 and 2 have argued that Campbell was

924 Van Gelder and Zscheile, The Missional Church in Perspective, 63. They are quick to admit that the “understanding of missional church did not just drop out of the sky from nowhere” (62); yet many others insist that the movement is sui generis, like “a phoenix rising from the dying embers of Christendom, something essentially new.” Hirsch and Ferguson, On the Verge, 17.
925 Just as in Campbell’s understanding of the Church as the institution of the Christian (or sunlight or ecumenical) age, the Old Testament and the Jewish people (Israelite nation) are a priori bracketed out as viable locales of ecclesiological exploration. The Church cannot be, according to this Scriptural understanding, a continuation of Israel, nor can it use the types of the Old Testament in any substantial way to illuminate the ecclesia of the apostolic age. Goheen provides a powerful and needed rebuttal of this reality; yet he too emphasizes the “discontinuity” between the missional call of the Old Testament and the New Testament ekklesia. See Michael W. Goheen, A Light to the Nations: The Missional Church and the Biblical Story (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011), esp. 157-161 and 192ff.
926 This does include an understanding of the Church as a “covenant community” in a similar way to Campbell. See Ed Stetzer and Alan Hirsch, eds., “Missional Manifesto,” November 2010.
928 As Goheen notes, “The missional church of today is a community of people who continue this [New Testament] witness of the early church”: A Light to the Nations, 195-96. See also ibid, 56; Newbigin, The Household of God, 163; Guder et al., Missional Church, 117.
929 David E. Fitch, Faithful Presence: Seven Disciplines That Shape the Church for Mission (Downer’s Grove, IL: IVP, 2016), 41. Fitch devotes an entire Appendix (5) to discussing the ways in which the New Testament church practiced the disciplines he is promoting for the missional church to reintegrate. Guder et al. also use the “pattern” language of New Testament ecclesiology: Guder et al., Missional Church, 224.
aiming toward. Others have seen parts of the New Testament acting as “something of a constitutional document of the church,”¹ not as written-code restorationism, but again in Campbellian fashion, as “God’s instrument to shape” the Church.² “The Scriptures are thus,” according to Guder et al, “the warrant for the church’s mission, instructing and guiding these mission communities by engaging their situations, their challenges, and their struggles.”³ For the C-M type of ecclesiology, the New Testament offers an explication of the nature of the Church as God intended, without the need for comprehensive or static ecclesiological dictation within its pages.⁴ This ecclesiological type intends to “call the church to recover her most ancient, her most potent, and also her most beautiful form” from the pages of the New Testament.⁵ While the New Testament Church shaped alternative missiological communities aimed at subverting the Roman Empire, the contemporary MC imitates this in the face of 21st-century capitalism and/or secularism.

Employing one of his many neologisms to highlight the dynamism of his ecclesiology, Hirsch asserts that the “New Testament church is movemental [defined by its sent nature] to the core.”⁶ Accordingly the contemporary church must also take up this movemental mantle. A constitutional function of the New Testament authorizes the nature – or at least the definitive functions – of the contemporary church, differentiated from its varied and variable forms.⁷

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² Guder et al., *Missional Church*, 256.
³ Ibid., 223.
⁴ Rather than using the word “example,” Hirsch and Ferguson prefer to talk of the New Testament church “inspiring” the contemporary church through its creative embodiment of its mission. Hirsch and Ferguson, *On the Verge*, 69. This is also clearly what 20th-century proponents of this type of ecclesiology were also promoting. See for instance Snyder, *The Community of the King*, 14.
⁵ Hirsch and Ferguson, *On the Verge*, 17. It is, in a certain way, a call to restore the form (the pattern of its nature, activity, and function) without necessarily seeking to restore all the forms of the New Testament Church.
⁶ Ibid., 32.
⁷ As Guder et al. put it with regard to the nature of the Church: “The Bible gives us both the what and the how of missional obedience.” Guder et al., *Missional Church*, 223.
Scripture remains the source of ecclesial authority, where the contemporary church continually returns in order to be “changed through renewed dialogue,” but that dialogue must not be abstracted from the “cultural context” in which the reading takes place. Patterns cannot be ignored or dismissed, but they can be inculturated; constitutions are non-negotiable, but must be contextually interpreted. The church of the New Testament had a telos that cannot be lost for the contemporary church. Being missional is not simply about the ecclesial nature of being “sent”; it presumes a mission to which its sent-ness is tethered. Therein, by re-contextualizing the patterns of the New Testament church, the contemporary church “now become[s] participants in God’s story.” This final cause of the Church, so to speak, is revealed to the contemporary Church in only one way: a “missiological reading of the New Testament.” This is how the MC tries to inhabit and permeate the wider culture through counter-cultural communities of witness.

Here we see the importance too of Campbell’s stress on the oneness or unity of the church of the New Testament. There can be diversity and disagreement among Christians even while “[o]ne can have no doubt that the unity of the Christian community is fundamental to its obedient witness, as defined by the New Testament.” The New Testament does not forbid such difference, but again provides examples and patterns of how to “disagree Christianly” about the

938 The term “inculturated” is used here purposefully, rather than the sociological term “enculturated.” The distinction between the terms is unpacked by Hastings: *Missional God, Missional Church*, 377ff Kindle Location.
939 For a 21st-century example of this C-M ecclesiology directly from the Churches of Christ of Campbell’s heritage, see Tim Woodroof, *A Church That Flies: A New Call to Restoration in the Churches of Christ* (Siloam Springs, AR: Leafwood Publishers, 2000). Woodroof emphasizes the function of the New Testament church as opposed to legalistic forms, in order to offer a patternistic reading of contextualization.
942 Guder et al., *Missional Church*, 262.
The Church’s visible oneness cannot be dislocated from its grounding in the New Testament presentation of the Church.\textsuperscript{943} Overall, the major connections between Campbell’s doctrine of Scripture and his ecclesiology are reaffirmed by the 21\textsuperscript{st}-century missional ecclesiologists. The Church finds herself looking to the New Testament for its ideal, which in its nature is sent to be a sign, witness, and foretaste of the kingdom of God – a counter-cultural community of action. The ongoing goal is not an exhaustive restoration of that New Testament church, but an attempt to employ a “missional hermeneutic” that can discover ecclesial patterns in the New Testament to contextually realize and employ them as an instrument of the larger unfolding missio Dei.\textsuperscript{945}

**Millennium**

The topic of millennialism does not carry the same “buzzworthy” energy in the 21\textsuperscript{st} century as it did in the mid-19\textsuperscript{th} century.\textsuperscript{946} However, Campbell’s obsession with the “Kingdom” – a passion not universally shared by his 19\textsuperscript{th}-century peers – has only grown in prominence among missional thinkers. The prominence of the “Kingdom of God/Christ” is a (or perhaps even the) central piece of the ecclesiological puzzle. For the church on mission the “radical meaning of New Testament eschatology [must] be heard anew” so it can continually realign itself to the Kingdom of God proclaimed in the gospel.\textsuperscript{947}

\textsuperscript{943} Ibid., 260.
\textsuperscript{944} See Snyder, *The Community of the King*, 10.
\textsuperscript{946} This is not true in the realm of dispensational evangelicals, where a certain Darby-Scofield stream of premillennialism (much different from the antebellum Millerite version) still reigns virtually unchallenged. For a sweeping revisionist account of the role of premillennialism in American evangelicalism through the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, see Matthew Avery Sutton, *American Apocalypse: A History of Modern Evangelicalism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014). See also Larry Eskridge, http://www.wheaton.edu/ISAE/Defining-Evangelicalism/End-Times (accessed January 26, 2017).
\textsuperscript{947} Guder et al., *Missional Church*, 230.
The principal tenet of all missional eschatology is the conviction that “God is up to something in the world that is bigger than the church even though the church is called to be sign, witness, and foretaste of God’s purpose in the world.” This something is the “active and comprehensive rule of God over His whole creation.” The reign of Christ is not yet fully realized, but it has been “inaugurated” and is progressing toward its complete unveiling when Christ will reign as King over his Kingdom. Roxburgh and Boren summarize it this way:

The Spirit is calling the church on a journey outside of itself and its internal focus. Rowan Williams, archbishop of Canterbury, summarizes this imagination in this way: “It is not the church of God that has a mission. It’s the God of mission that has a church.” He is saying God is at work in the world to redeem creation, and God invites us to participate in this mission. God is not interested in getting more and more people into the institution of the church. Instead the church is to be God’s hands and feet in accomplishing God’s mission. This imagination turns most of our church practices on their head.

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948 Roxburgh and Boren, *Introducing the Missional Church*, 20. Guder *et al.* put it this way, “The church must not be equated with the reign of God. The church as a messianic community is both spawned by the reign of God and directed toward it… This view [that they are synonymous] leads easily to the affirmation that there is no salvation outside the church.” Guder *et al.*, *Missional Church*, 98.


950 The eschatological verbiage is strikingly similar to Campbell’s novel conception of a “Christocracy.”

951 Roxburgh and Boren, *Introducing the Missional Church*, 20. I have not been able to find the quote attributed to Rowan Williams (also attributed as such in other missional church publications). It is, however, eerily similar to Tim Dearborn’s words at the beginning of *Beyond Duty*, which read, “[The] God of mission has given his church to the world. It is not the church of God that has a mission in the world, but the God of mission who has a church in the world. The church’s involvement in mission is its privileged participation in the actions of the triune God.” Tim Dearborn, *Beyond Duty: A Passion for Christ, a Heart for Mission* (Monrovia, CA: MARC, 1997), 2. The likelihood is this has been misattributed to Williams, as the Dearborn quote is included (with proper citation) in a working group publication of the Church of England that was commissioned by Williams (who also wrote the Foreword preceding the quote) while he was Archbishop of Canterbury: *Mission-Shaped Church: Church Planting and Fresh Expressions of Church in a Changing Context* (London: Church House, 2004). The quote from Roxburgh and Boren in its entirety is indicative of a subtle but important fissure in the missional church movement. There is a noticeable difference between missional ecclesiologists that prioritize the activity of God outside the church, to which the church is called to join, as opposed to those who see the church herself as the presence and vehicle of God’s reconciling activity in the world. Here Roxburgh and Boren clearly show their preference for the former understanding.

Two identifiable influences appear to have encouraged the distinction. The first is a dispute that arose between Newbigin and the Dutch theologian Hoekendijk about how to understand the missio Dei. For Newbigin, the missio Dei was the Trinitarian activity of God reconciling the world to himself, in which the church was the primary agent. This is considered the specialized understanding of the missio Dei. Conversely, Hoekendijk, later influencing the WCC’s General Secretary Konrad Raiser, reinterpreted the missio Dei as the activity of God’s reconciliation beyond human or ecclesial agency. This is considered the generalized understanding of the missio Dei. For helpful summaries of the Newbigin-Hoekendijk-Raiser dispute, see Peterson, *Who Is the Church?*, 85–86; Van Gelder and Zscheile, *The Missional Church in Perspective*, 30–40, 52–59. The other vehicle that travelled in the same direction, but in a very different theological realm, was the rise of Pentecostal and Charismatic pneumatology. The Pentecostal movement broadened the existing evangelical understanding of God’s activity by emphasizing the Spirit that “blows
The Church as the progressively unveiled Kingdom, takes on a distinct twofold shape: “word and deed ministry.”\textsuperscript{952} By accepting this twofold missional emphasis of the Church, members are “converted into a salvation that is bigger than [themselves]… [becoming] participants in God’s work of reconciling the whole world to Himself (2 Cor. 5:17-21).”\textsuperscript{953} The reconciliation of \textit{all things} in Christ (Col. 1:20) is another way to describe the fully realized “sovereign reign of God” that ushers in “righteousness (right relationships with God, others, and creation), restores, and brings healing to a broken world.”\textsuperscript{954} The comprehensiveness of this vision is entirely in line with Campbell’s millennial activism, which called for the Church to be a blessing to the whole world, from the “amelioration” of social ills to the unity of the Church rooted in the \textit{εὐαγγέλιον} of Christ.\textsuperscript{955}

The Church never ceases to be the “harbinger” of the fully revealed Kingdom of God.\textsuperscript{956} Here both Campbell and contemporary usage are marked by a thick understanding of “harbinger,” where the Church is a \textit{sign} and \textit{witness}, but also a \textit{foretaste} of the “wholeness that humanity craves,” which is the Kingdom of God.\textsuperscript{957} The Church helps deliver the very reality it is pregnant with, the reign of Christ and the presence of the Spirit. It is a realized eschatology, though it is not yet fully manifest. Accordingly, Fitch maintains that the Church “experiences the where it will” (Jn. 3:8). The shift to a pneumatological missiology instigated a preoccupation with discerning where the Spirit was \textit{already} at work in the world (explicitly) beyond the Church.

\textsuperscript{952} Lois Y. Barrett, ed., \textit{Treasure In Clay Jars: Patterns in Missional Faithfulness} (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 149, 151. For further unpacking of the idea of repatterning, see Guder \textit{et al.}, \textit{Missional Church}, 105. For more on “word and deed” see Van Gelder and Zscheile, \textit{The Missional Church in Perspective}, 34. Stetzer and Hirsch, “Missional Manifesto,” Affirmation 8: Duality.


\textsuperscript{954} Stetzer and Hirsch, “Missional Manifesto,” Affirmation 3: Kingdom.

\textsuperscript{955} Ibid., Affirmation 4: Mission. See also Fitch, \textit{Faithful Presence}, 209.

\textsuperscript{956} Norman Kraus, in his 1978 work \textit{The Authentic Witness}, put it this way: “The life of the church \textit{is} its witness. The witness of the church \textit{is} its life” (cited in Guder \textit{et al.}, \textit{Missional Church}, 182.)

\textsuperscript{957} Ibid., 103.
kingdom ahead of time,” as the presence of God is “visibly now” in the Church, but not yet in the full world.958

Despite the contemporary MC’s relative indifference toward the millennial preoccupation of the antebellum period, the eschatological relationship between the Kingdom of God and the Church follows the same tracks in both the 19th and 21st centuries. The scope of the Church as a sign, witness, and foretaste of the Kingdom among 21st-century thinkers maps onto Campbell’s own eschatological ecclesiology. The Church moves beyond merely pointing to the Kingdom and participates with the triune God in a “co-partnery” (as Campbell calls it) to preach the gospel and address societal ills in hopes of inducing the full onset of the desired “salubrious state.”

Structure

The C-M ecclesiology is a practiced or practical type of the Church.959 A premium is placed on the internal coherence involved in doing Church in the post-9/11 context, with overly abstracted discussions of ecclesiology being eschewed. Thus, the structural forms of the Church must always be reformed and adapted as local congregations keep one foot in the patterns of the New Testament and the other in the cultural context. This semper reformanda posture on the forms of the Church has often “left us with few ways to organize the church so as to see its role as central to mission.”960 Yet, as Fitch continues, it is “essential that individuals doing mission form organized communities of the kingdom in the world.”961

958 Fitch, Faithful Presence, 39. See also Guder et al., Missional Church, 106. Guder even calls the Church a “harbinger” in true Campbellian fashion (108).
959 I am not explicitly using the term “practice” as it has been used by David Kelsey and other Yale School theologians (who borrow from Alasdair MacIntyre and more abstractly from Charles Taylor). For a positive assessment of “Practiced Ecclesiology” from a Roman Catholic (who is heavily indebted to Stanley Hauerwas) see Nicholas M. Healy, Church, World, and the Christian Life: Practical-Prophetic Ecclesiology (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), Introduction. For more critical assessments, see Gary D. Badcock, The House Where God Lives: Renewing the Doctrine of the Church for Today (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 2009), chapter 1; John Webster, “The Church and the Perfection of God,” in The Community of the Word: Toward an Evangelical Ecclesiology, ed. Mark Husbands and Daniel J. Treier (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2005), 77.
960 Fitch, Faithful Presence, 197.
961 Ibid., 200.
The function of anything resembling tradition in a missional ecclesiological structure is purely negative.\textsuperscript{962} The “established Western traditional churches,” or the “legacy of Christendom,” especially the Roman Catholic Church, are considered false, unreformed churches that remains “marked by cultural captivity,” bound with the fetters of tradition.\textsuperscript{963} Moreover, because the Church is always \textit{on mission} and adapting to cultural changes, in “many places [the changes are] so radical it barely resembles church as we know it.”\textsuperscript{964} The failure of Catholicism in the 21st-century is not doctrinal, but its institutional rigidity and dogmatic top-down structure.

In its fundamental opposition to Christendom’s perceived traditionalism, a premium is placed on \textit{adiaphora} – the liberality of \textit{things indifferent} to the essence of the Church. Discussions of organizational polity are often caricatured as inherently vapid and contrasted to the avowed life-giving habits of missional practices – alternative communities and cultural renovators.\textsuperscript{965} Still, though Guder \textit{et al} are insistent that there is a clear demarcation between the “forms” and the “essence” of the Church, some \textit{form of the forms} always exist, but never touch the actual Church as such.\textsuperscript{966} There is no “model,” or “standardized program,” or even an overly-developed “strategy” to be superimposed on churches, but instead a process of discernment by

\textsuperscript{962} Hirsch and Catchim, \textit{The Permanent Revolution}, xxii. Their positive affirmation of tradition appears purely rhetorical, and the rest of the book is a manifesto against any and all vestiges of traditional ecclesiology.
\textsuperscript{963} Guder \textit{et al.}, \textit{Missional Church}, 5. “The inherited structures of denominations and ecumenical organizations are profoundly marked by cultural captivity. In these structures, the ancient European legacy of compromises with power, property, influence brokering, competition, and empire building is obvious” (253). Fitch uses the tamer designator of “maintenance mode” for the church that “becomes too comfortable in society or when it aligns itself with power.” Fitch, \textit{Faithful Presence}, 42. See also Hirsch and Ferguson, \textit{On the Verge}, 32.
\textsuperscript{965} Hirsch and Ferguson write, “This isn’t to say God doesn’t like order or that there’s no structure to movements; it is to say the original church structure is very unlike the kind of structures that emerged with the Christendom form of church.” Hirsch and Ferguson, \textit{On the Verge}, 40.
\textsuperscript{966} Guder \textit{et al.}, \textit{Missional Church}, 72. Cf. Snyder: “So we come now to the question of church structure, the form of the church. The thesis of this chapter is that structure is inevitable but that not all church structures are equally valid or appropriate for the church.” Snyder, \textit{The Community of the King}, 159.
being attuned to the dual voices of culture and Scripture. The winning formula, as we discovered with Campbell, is that “form follows missional function in the New Testament church,” and therefore the contemporary Church ought to implement just such a dynamic process of adaptability and faithfulness.

While the local congregation is the “most basic expression of the missional church,” it can never be an island unto itself. There is a need for a “paralocal” structure that “fit[s] into a more holistic understanding of the biblical character of missional structures generally.”

However, the place of existing denominational structures is somewhat ambivalent. Using the terminology of Campbell, Guder et al. follow the antebellum theologian step for step, claiming,

It is not biblical, however, for particular communities of the visible, organized church to exist in isolation from one another… The people of God, in all their cultural diversity, may be understood as a universal community of communities. The particular community is, in an essential sense, an expression of the church catholic.

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967 Van Gelder and Zscheile, *The Missional Church in Perspective*, 165. They summarize this idea, noting, “[W]hat missional transformation looks like in each congregation will tend to be somewhat unique. The key is for ordinary church members to develop their capacity to listen to God’s Word in community, to listen to the Spirit, and to listen to their neighbors in love” (165).


970 Guder et al., *Missional Church*, 75. Guder et al.’s repudiation of hyper-congregationalism (266ff) is not unlike Campbell’s own aversion to those who refused cooperative efforts. Here Hirsch and Ferguson suggest a similar model to Campbell, although they add a fourth “civic” level between the local and regional Church (Campbell proposed a three-tiered organization: see chapter 1 section 3). See Hirsch and Ferguson, *On the Verge*, 136.

971 Although no 21st-century missional thinkers come to Campbell’s extreme conclusion that all existing denominational structures ought to be disposed of outright, there is an enormous amount of sympathy for the ills that much denominationalism has wrought in undermining the missional call of the Church (both local and universal). Snyder calls for at least the “desacralizing” of denominational structures that do not align with the biblical patterns. See Snyder, *The Community of the King*, 77.

972 Guder et al., *Missional Church*, 248. Emphasis added to highlight the shared Campbellian phrase. Snyder, with the help of Bloesch, frames this differently, writing, “The goal of such an ‘evangelical ecumenism,’ said Bloesch, ‘would not simply be the unity of the church but also and above all the conversion of the world.’ The missionary motive, rather than being an excuse for continuing fragmentation, must be the reason for evangelical convergence.” Snyder, *The Community of the King*, 203.
Hirsch and Ferguson try to find a balance between centralized and decentralized “networks” of organizational structures – aggressively avoiding hierarchical ones – while Guder and company refer to the “centrifugal” movement from local to global connectedness, and Hastings plays off the opposing forces of “centrifugal” and “centripetal.” Any way it is conceived, the Church for the C-M type is preeminently marked by the local congregation in search of a unity-in-diversity in the wider community of communities.

In sum, the structural similarity between Campbell and 21st-century missional thinkers is not found in organizational mimesis, but in methodological process. The voice of tradition is drowned out as an authority in the realm of ecclesial polity, yet there is a forceful call for some measure of organization. Structural form of the Church follows missional function, though the pragmatism of this type is still chastened by the patterns of the New Testament as an informing and authoritative voice. Just so, the Church catholic is a community of communities that is instantiated in its local and universal realities, with an emphasis on the local congregation as the most fundamental building-block.

**Constitution**

If the nature of the Church is missional, then it must be constituted by the one whose mission it inhabits. “Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church, the Lord of the Church,” claims Kaiser, and since “since Jesus Christ is the owner of his Church and thus all of its local

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975 It is noteworthy that authors such as Fitch and Holsclaw explicitly reject the “Emerging” and “Neo-Reformed” ecclesial trends of the 21st century. See Fitch and Holsclaw, *Prodigal Christianity Ten Signposts into the Missional Frontier*, xv. This dual rejection mirrors, in some manner, the dismissal of the popular “Unitarian” and “Reformed” alternatives presented to Campbell in the 19th century. There is a sense in which the C-M type sees itself as a middle way between the complete rejection of inherited ecclesial forms (ie. Emerging and Unitarian options) and the rigidification of confessional heritages (ie. Neo-Reformed and Reformed options).
976 “To be missional is a matter of the character of the church, what the church is, whose the church is.” Barrett, *Treasure In Clay Jars*, 151.
expressions, we do not get to dream up the mission for our congregation."\(^{977}\) As for Campbell, the simple New Testament confession of “Jesus is Lord” serves to ground the place of Christ in His Church and its subsequent nature.\(^{978}\) The Church as founded upon the thing confessed – Jesus is Lord! – ensures it is more than a human institution. Here the eschatological vision of this ecclesial type aligns with the Christological constitution. The Church is the “\textit{social body of [Jesus’]} Lordship (His Reign) incarnating Christ in the world for God’s mission,” thereby showing that the Church is different in kind than a human “democracy” and is much closer to Campbell’s concept of a Christocracy.\(^{979}\)

The centrality of Christ as the head of the Church is stated in a straightforward manner in the \textit{Missional Manifesto}. “We believe that Jesus is the center of God’s plan. By extension, the church as the body of Christ is the primary medium of God’s mission to His world.”\(^{980}\) Even the constitution of the Church, with Christ as the founding cornerstone, is explanatory of the activity of the Church. As Campbell put it, Christ as head of the Church is not simply representational, but shapes the very nature and purpose of the body itself.\(^{981}\) And though the completion of His reign is not yet at hand, the embodiment of his kingdom in the Church is His “presence already among the churches,” embodying a unity of mission that will not fail to bring to completion what the Christological founding of the Church ensured.\(^{982}\)

As its “Holy Guest,” Campbell saw the Spirit’s constitution of the Church in two primary ways. First, the Spirit constitutes the Church as the body of Christ’s “vitalizing breath” or

\[\textit{\footnotesize\bibliography}{977-982}\]
Christ’s continuing presence, which preceded the inclusion of Spirit-indwelt individuals. Second, the Spirit is the *recreative, renovating,* and *regenerating* power of the Church. The Spirit as the life or heart of the Body of Christ is certainly not unique to Campbell. In unpacking his own ecclesiology, Fitch affirms that “Christ reigns as head of a physical body *by* the Spirit.”\(^983\) In an earlier work with Holsclaw, he writes, “God in Christ has not come once upon a time and then left us. He continues to be with us in a deep and abiding manner by the Spirit.”\(^984\) In connecting Campbell’s twofold ecclesial vocation of the Spirit, Snyder claims that the new reality of “Jesus as Lord” does not exclude the Spirit from the constitution of the Church, but the Church lives into this Christological reality through the very “character and power” of the Holy Spirit.\(^985\) The Spirit as the “empowerment” of the Church and her members leads it into the very mission promised by Christ before he ascended.\(^986\)

Preeminently for the C-M type, the Church is understood as the dynamic unfolding of its Christological and pneumatological constitution. The Church is carrying out the missional nature of the Triune God.\(^987\) Many contemporary missional thinkers refer to this twofold missional expression simply as the “‘incarnational’ understanding of the church’s nature and mission.”\(^988\) The Church extends to the culture around it the “faithful presence” of the Son and the Spirit’s

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\(^983\) Fitch, *Faithful Presence,* 29. Emphasis added. Here Fitch refers to the “physical body” not as Jesus’ earthly body, but as the visible and material body that is the corporate Church. In this distinction, he is much closer to Campbell than Nevin, who emphasizes the continuity of Jesus’ earthly body and the body of the Church.

\(^984\) Fitch and Holsclaw, *Prodigal Christianity Ten Signposts into the Missional Frontier,* 42.

\(^985\) Snyder, *The Community of the King,* 114. See also Tim Chester and Steve Timmis, *Total Church: A Radical Reshaping around Gospel and Community* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), 29.


\(^987\) See for instance Hastings, *Missional God, Missional Church,* ch. 4; Guder et al., *Missional Church,* 81. Hastings uses Irenaeus’s image of the Son and Spirit as the “two hands” of God active in the world (114 Kindle Location).

\(^988\) Peterson, *Who Is the Church?,* 89. Despite the term “incarnational” being overtly Christological, the connotation of the Church’s incarnational nature is that it embodies both the mission of the Son and the Spirit. There is a strong connection here to the mark of “holiness” as the set-apartness of the Church for a particular “direction” as given by God’s Trinitarian reality. See Guder et al., *Missional Church,* 117.
mission in the world. As Goheen puts it, there is no “specific activity of the church” that can adequately describe this reality, but it is the whole “identity of the church as it takes up its role in God’s story in the context of its culture and participates in his mission to the world.” Both Campbell and 21st-century versions of missional ecclesiology have spent less time on developing this constructively and more time railing against what they see as the profound case of “mission amnesia” in the “North American church.” It is easier to claim that the Church “has forgotten why it exists” than to agree upon exactly how the Trinitarian mission of the Son and Spirit are “incarnated” within the contemporary Church and culture. What does it look like, then, for the Church’s nature to be embodied by the divine unfolding of its very constitution?

**Visibility**

Campbell’s understanding of the visibility of the Church is convoluted at best. The reality of a visibly fragmented Church was not a license to seek unity in the invisible, but an indictment against the one visible Church that had failed to be an effective witness in the economy of the Triune God. Therefore, it should not be surprising that discussions of unity and the (in)visibility of the Church have also been crucial for the 21st-century missional theologians, just as they were for Campbell.

The collective authorship of *Missional Church* writes, “In the New Testament there is no dichotomy between a supposed invisible church and the visible one.” Just as with Campbell, they do not outright reject an invisible ecclesial unity, but believe that a “spiritual unity that is..."
neither concrete nor institutional is, by definition, not incarnational." The *sentness* of the Church – her very missionary character – necessitates a visible unity. Otherwise her incarnational witness is *de facto* dismembered. The connection between the unity of the Church and her visible mission is a decisive characteristic for the C-M type. The nature of this unity is an *ad hoc* or informal unity, progressively gathering around the basic professed and lived witness of the Church.

What is vital to grasp here is not simply the shared emphasis between Campbell and the 21st-century thinkers on an ecumenism focused on the visible unity of the Church, but what that vision implies. This kind of unity, so this type claims, will lead to the proper witness of the Church to the increasingly post-Christian world. Guder *et al* bring these ideas together nicely:

> Jesus seeks our oneness with one another ‘so that the world may believe’ that he indeed has been sent by his Father (17:21). *The church’s love and unity holds ultimate significance for the world as the visible basis of the gospel’s power and legitimacy.* In fact, the church is itself the promise of the gospel. The universal invitation to believe the gospel includes the invitation to enter the reign-of-God-produced community of the new humanity.

> If the Church is to be united, then it is to be so in a way that is apparent; that is, “not only audible but visible as well.” The terminology used to speak of this visibility in contemporary

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994 Ibid., 263. See also 104.
995 Cf. ibid., 260.
996 Snyder calls this the shared “verbal and incarnational dimensions” of evangelical ecumenicity. These are rooted in the Petrine confession and obedience to the commands of the gospel spelled out in the New Testament. Snyder, *The Community of the King*, 201–2. Snyder even refers to this as “unity in truth,” unwittingly riffing off the foundational document of Campbell’s Disciples that acclaimed as its motto “Union in Truth.” Thomas Campbell, *Declaration and Address of the Christian Association of Washington*, Centennial Edition (Pittsburgh, PA: Centennial Bureau, 1908).
997 Yet there is also a shared sense that the visible unity of the Church is not merely a “pragmatic” means to a missional end, but that it finds its rationale in the biblical understanding of the Church first and foremost. The patternistic reading of the New Testament will lead to the visible unity of the one Church, which in turn will unlock the effective witness of the activist institution. Each part is divinely ordered and not incidental or disposable to the final *telos* of the Church. See Ibid., 205.
999 Barrett, *Treasure In Clay Jars*, 149.
missional theology is varied (ie. incarnational, embodied, faithful presence, and witness), but the underlying presupposition that the visible Church tangibly participates in God’s mission is the same. Despite being a “real, human, social organism” that has sinned and will continue to sin, the Church remains the chosen instrument of God, carrying out God’s mission because it is the very body of Christ.

A visible and united Church that participates in the mission of God on earth is an ideal ecclesial image, not a reality. C-M ecclesiologists recognize that the Church that has existed through history has fallen well short of that ideal. There is both an is and an is not reality to the Church embodying the mission of God. Using her Lutheran theological heritage, Peterson claims that missional ecclesiologies are very aware that the Church is simul iustus et peccator. It must be equally recognized that “[what] the church identifies as true about itself because of Christ, it also knows to be far from true about itself in its present experience.” Again, seeming to echo Campbell himself, Snyder concludes,

There is but one people of God on earth, and it is as the people of God that the church is one. This is much more than an invisible, spiritual unity. The oneness must not be shunted off into “eternity,” for it exists in space and time, though imperfectly. For both theological and practical reasons – that is, for the sake of effective witness – it must be given some visible structural expression.

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1000 Fitch attempts to relate some of these differing terms, claiming, “In mathematical terms we might put it this way: missio Dei + incarnation = witness. This is faithful presence.” Fitch, Faithful Presence, 202.
1001 Guder et al., Missional Church, 12–13.
1002 Peterson, Who Is the Church?, 92. Earlier (90) she quotes Guder, who writes, “The community incarnates its witness to love in no other way more profoundly than in its honest admission of its own sin and its continuing growth toward the fullness of that love. In other words, the community enfleshes the gospel of love as it lives out its forgiveness before all the world.” Darrell L. Guder, The Incarnation and the Church’s Witness: (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2005), 46.
1003 Guder et al., Missional Church, 103.
1004 Snyder, The Community of the King, 200.
It is the “though imperfectly” of Snyder’s quote that rings most true when the Church is considered through time. It is also why the GOCN’s 2004 publication was titled *Treasures in Clay Jars*, using 2 Cor 4:7 as a way to speak about the priceless Kingdom that is held within “imperfect” vessels. For the MC, the sinfulness of the Church has been multiplied when it has become institutionalized and turned-in on itself, having lost its grassroots and democratic activism. In the end, the C-M type endorses an activist ecclesiology, seeking to make visible a united Church that participates tangibly in the ongoing reconciliation of all things in Christ.

There is the unavoidable reality, however, of the Church’s failure, made apparent by its divided—and therefore missionally frustrated—state.

**Summary of the Campbell-Missional Ecclesiology in the 21st Century**

Looking to replicate the patterns of the New Testament church in a culturally appropriate and contextually sensitive manner, this ecclesiological type labors, in the faith that it is embodying the very mission of the Son and the Spirit, to bring the Kingdom of God to reign. The all too apparent challenge for the C-M type is not simply the opposition of a post-Christendom (or even post-Christian) context, but the legacy of institutionalism that has left a visibly disunited

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1005 Twenty-first-century missional thinkers are more apt than Campbell to point to the so-called Constantinian captivity of the Church as the initial devolution of the true Church. The idea of a “Constantinian captivity” is by no means the monopoly of missional thinkers. See Douglas John Hall, *God and Human Suffering: An Exercise in the Theology of the Cross* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1986); Cornel West, *Democracy Matters: Winning the Fight Against Imperialism* (New York: Penguin, 2004). Despite the different “fall narratives,” which tend to focus on the “institutionalization” of the Church, the resultant historical explanation is not dissimilar to Campbell’s. Though Campbell focused on the “purity” of the Church (contra religious idolatry) while contemporary thinkers worry about its “freedom” (contra political powers), the ecclesial alternative narrative includes the usual suspects as well as some different ones: “the early church, the Celtic movement, the Waldensians, the Franciscans, Moravians, Wesleyan revivals, early Pentecostalism, the Chinese underground church, the Indian people-movements, Latin-American Christianity, to name but a few.” Hirsch and Ferguson, *On the Verge*, 33. Hirsch and Ferguson even provide a historical map of the true Church through the centuries (34-38). On the anti-Constantinian nature of the missional Church, see Hastings, *Missional God, Missional Church*, 567ff Kindle Location. Historical narratives of the “captivity” of the true Church appear in George Barna, *Revolution* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 2005); Frank Viola, *Reimagining Church: Pursuing the Dream of Organic Christianity* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2008); Frank Viola and George Barna, *Pagan Christianity?: Exploring the Roots of Our Church Practices* (Carol Stream, IL: BarnaBooks, 2008); Frank Viola, *Beyond the Reformation*: A Missional Approach to Church *Practice* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 2005). For an extended H-C critique of these narratives, see Kevin L. DeYoung and Ted A. Kluck, *Why We Love the Church: In Praise of Institutions and Organized Religion* (Chicago: Moody, 2009), chapter 5.

1006 Barrett, *Treasure In Clay Jars*, xii.
Church – factious infighting that has deformed the very body of Christ. The Church’s constitution precedes the inclusion of her members as the Spirit inhabits the body of Christ, but upon inclusion her members are made true partners in the divine mission of Christ’s kingdom on earth. Issues deemed too speculative or only tangentially related to the “practical and prophetic discipline” of the Church are denigrated in favour of keeping the dynamic work of the missio Dei in the place of prominence.¹⁰⁰⁷

**Hodge-Conventional Ecclesiology in the 21st century**

From its online launch in 2007, TGC website estimates that it received 65 million page views in 2016 and now boasts an online directory of associated churches that nears 8,000. The meteoric rise of TGC’s popularity is, in part, due to the gravity of leaders that have championed its cause, but also because of its conducive message to the average evangelical Christian in America who cares little for denominational boundaries or historical connections. After all, who would want to stand in the way of gospel cooperation that transcends the ecclesial politics, structural red-tape, and peculiar theological predilections that have befallen so many evangelical initiatives in the past century. Furthermore, its willingness to ask big questions about the Church in the face of war, disaster, and terrorism is crucial to a generation that sees the 21st century as a new land. It is the preeminent expression of a large swath of American evangelicals: biblical-centred, activisitly-oriented, culturally relevant, and focused on the cross – all of which is

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¹⁰⁰⁷ The connection to other contemporary ecclesiological offerings that do not focus on the *missional* language *per se* is interesting. For instance, Healy’s proposal – though arriving at several different conclusions – is marked by the same methodological presuppositions and priorities: “The thesis is that ecclesiology is better thought of as more of a practical and prophetic discipline than a speculative and systematic one. The church’s response to its ever-shifting context should not first-and-foremost be to formulate theoretical constructions, be they doctrinal or moral systems, but should be to reconstruct its concrete identity so as to embody its witness in truthful discipleship.” Healy, *Church, World, and the Christian Life*, 21–22. Part of the shared emphasis is simply a prioritization of contextual particulars over the abstracted universals of certain ecclesiological doctrines. Healy continues, claiming, “We can assess any ecclesiological proposal by how well it helps the church respond to its context” (22).
communicated with clarity and brevity. The following section seeks to confirm the H-C evangelical ecclesiological type in the 21st century as manifest particularly in TGC.\footnote{1008}

**Bible**

This 21st-century embodiment of the H-C type is summarized well by The Gospel Coalition “Foundation Document,” which conjures the legacy of Hodge:

> We believe that in many evangelical churches a deep and broad consensus exists regarding the truths of the gospel. Yet we often see the celebration of our union with Christ replaced by the age-old attractions of power and affluence, or by monastic retreats into ritual, liturgy, and sacrament… We desire to champion this gospel with clarity, compassion, courage, and joy – gladly linking hearts with fellow believers across denominational, ethnic, and class lines.\footnote{1009}

Because of the centrality of the *gospel* within TGC, we must unpack the term further.\footnote{1010} Chapell notes that a “good summary” of the gospel is found in 1 Timothy 1:15, which reads, “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.”\footnote{1011} He concludes, “Whether we have known an imprisonment of body, mind, habit, guilt, relationship, or circumstance, Jesus Christ comes to save us eternally from it all. This is great news – and it is the gospel!”\footnote{1012}

Immediately one notices a distinct difference between TGC’s pervasive usage of *gospel* and the C-M thinkers’ use of the *missio Dei*. Both Campbell and Hodge view the Bible as being about and for salvation, but here we see vividly how similar statements can carry vastly different

\footnote{1008} The connection between Hodge and TGC in this section will be made theologically, not historically. Any such genetic history would have to wade through not only the Modernist controversy but also the New (or Neo) Evangelicals of the mid-20th century. Still, the prevalence of the name Charles Hodge in TGC blogs and resources is an indication that, even if there is no genetic connection, a reclamation project is underway to restore Old Princeton to its one-time glory. It is not hard to imagine the possibility of tracing Hodge’s legacy directly to TGC.


\footnote{1010} The “centrality” of the term *gospel* in The Gospel Coalition should not, of course, be surprising. Yet “centrality” may be too tame a word to denote the near-obsessive usage of the term in their resources. The ubiquity of the term is juxtaposed on both sides by evangelicals who have shied away from using a term that, though having a long and vital place in evangelical heritage, is also fraught with ambiguity and carries certain connotations that some evangelicals find cliché.


\footnote{1012} Ibid., 134.
connotations. Unlike the C-M’s partnership in the *missio Dei*,\textsuperscript{1013} the H-Cists view the *gospel* as fundamentally a message about God rescuing sinners from their “imprisonments.” Despite both groups’ insistence that the Bible is soteriological, their differing theological presuppositions alter the form of this shared emphasis.

Bullmore states that the *gospel* is both the *cause* and *effect* of Scripture.\textsuperscript{1014} The Bible, then, has an objective (largely propositional) content that demands a subjective appropriation by the individual hearer. In the end, the term “gospel” becomes shorthand for a type of doctrinal schemata of individual justification-sanctification: “[The] overwhelming majority of Scripture is about our redemption, how God saves lawbreakers, how sin can be atoned for, how rebels can be made right with God.”\textsuperscript{1015} It is a use of the Bible that mirrors Hodge’s closely, and “gospel” becomes a kind of evangelical shorthand for this understanding of the Bible’s nature and use.

Why, then, is there so much ecclesiological diversity among the TGC? Council Member Mark Dever has written more about the Church than any other member of TGC, and yet his books appear fixated upon the *patterns* of the New Testament Church in a more Campbellian fashion.\textsuperscript{1016} In the end, however, the overlapping consensus of the individual “gospel for

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\textsuperscript{1013} Hastings puts it this way: “God's mission was to be carried out by the church – the church as a signal of the new humanity, the church as the sign and servant of the kingdom of God, for the re-creation of the cosmos.” Hastings, *Missional God, Missional Church*, 308–09 Kindle Location.
\textsuperscript{1015} DeYoung and Kluck, *Why We Love the Church*, 45.
salvation” persists as the determining factor for Dever. Thus, echoing Hodge he concludes, “While no church constitution is included in the New Testament documents, the Bible has principles which inform a congregation’s life.”

Borrowing a metaphor from Chandler, Geiger, and Patterson, we could suggest that the biblical principles are the materials used in the foundation of a house. They are the non-negotiables of ecclesiology that determine the parameters of what will constitute its structure. The philosophy of ministry is then the structure of the house, while the practices are the furnishings and fixtures of the house. There is undoubtedly varying levels of comfort within the TGC as to the contextualization that Chandler, Geiger, and Patterson allow for with their generously understood category of “furnishings and fixtures” (adiaphora); nonetheless, their broad conclusions are upheld by all in TGC:

A wise homeowner understands the difference between foundation, structure, and furniture. He would never allow someone to change the foundation. If he notices a crack in the concrete next to his house, he inspects it to be sure the crack is not indicative of a shaky foundation. Walls are only moved if it is clear that the change will better serve the family and the guests that visit. No one wants to live in a house where the walls are always shifting. But as far as the color of the walls and the choice of furniture go, he holds much more loosely to these because he knows that every few years his wife will desire a new color in the living room and his kids won’t like Spider-Man forever.

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1018 Dever, *The Church*, 2890–91 Kindle Location. He notes earlier that not “all differences in ecclesiology are tantamount to differences over the gospel itself” (99-100 Kindle Location)
1020 The authors seem a bit lost with what to do with divinely ordained “practices” (ordinances and discipline) so as not to insinuate that they are nothing more than the paint colour on the wall of the house. In attempting to protect them from the whims of “context” they place them in the “ministerial philosophy” section. Unfortunately, that neither guards their alteration entirely nor makes logical sense within the metaphor where “practices” are explicitly the furnishings of the home. See ibid., 1618–20 Kindle Location. On the distinction between being and wellbeing in the doctrine of the Church, see also Driscoll and Breshears, *Vintage Church*, 37.
1021 Chandler, Geiger, and Patterson, *Creature of the Word*, 1625–30 Kindle Location.
Thus, the details of ecclesiology “must be held loosely,” bearing in mind that the “furniture exists to serve the family, not the other way around.”

In sum, the Bible is about (objective cause) and for (subjective effect) the gospel of salvation for sinners. By extracting biblical principles from Scripture, TGC members are able to construct a plan of salvation that is then prioritized over anything else the Bible may be about or for, including ecclesiology. Therefore, while there exists a tremendous diversity among members of the Coalition as to the details of ecclesial polity found in the New Testament, in the end, ecclesiology itself is subjected to the overlapping consensus of the gospel-as-center.

**Millennium**

“The Restoration of All Things” is the topic-heading of the Foundation Document that aims to address the eschatological consensus of TGC. Since most members of TGC fall in the historic premillennial or amillennial category of eschatology, it is no surprise that, like Hodge, the eschatological aspects of the “gospel” are underplayed in comparison to much popular evangelicals expressions. The reticent eschatology expressed is entirely consistent with Hodge’s own: “The kingdom, therefore, is both the present spiritual reign of God and the future

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1022 Ibid., 1624–25 Kindle Location. The authors continue, “Your church’s practice is dictated largely by your context. And as long as your practice flows from a solid theological foundation and ministry philosophy, you should feel released to enjoy an immense amount of freedom.” Ibid., 1673–74 Kindle Location.

1023 The “Vision” section of TGC’s Foundational Documents notes that reading the Bible well means “reading ‘along’ the whole Bible. To read along the whole Bible is to discern the single basic plot-line of the Bible as God’s story of redemption... In this perspective, the gospel appears as creation, fall, redemption, restoration.” See “Foundation Documents: Vision,” *TGC - The Gospel Coalition*, accessed March 2, 2017, https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/about/foundation-documents/vision.


1025 There are members and supporters of TGC who affirm a pretribulation dispensational premillennialism (the rapture of the faithful Christians prior to a seven-year earthly tribulation and subsequent return of Christ for a millennium of peace). Prominent examples include John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine: A Systematic Summary of Bible Truth* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 20010–11 Kindle Location; Gregg Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 634–35 Kindle Location. The “historic premillennial” position of members like Albert Mohler does not emphasize the distinction between Israel and the Church in the same decisive manner, and therefore falls much closer to an amillennialist position.
realm over which he will rule in power and glory.”

The present and future realms never blend, differing in composition. The current reality is a spiritual kingdom wrought by Christ alone at his first coming and enduring through the Spirit’s endowment until the second coming of Christ. So, while the “future eschatological hope of the Christian is inescapably earthly in nature,” the current reality is one that exists in “a hidden form” and is inhabited by “those who accept it… intermingled with those who reject it until the consummation.” Here the post-9/11 focus of TGC comes into acute focus. In light of the mess of the world – terrorism, suffering, disaster, etc. – the sovereignty of God is accentuated in a way vastly different from the two other types. The agency of the Church is spiritualized to detach it from any responsibility of cosmic reconciliation that lies with God alone. The mystery of God’s sovereignty is beyond his people and the Church, though not irrational. Trevin Wax lays it out clearly:

God was in control. The evil of 9/11, though not approved by God, is somehow part of His master plan. The cross reminds us that God can bring the greatest good from the greatest evil. No pain is therefore senseless. And God will one day defeat evil forever.

One thing should be clear from the summary above: The Church, as it exists in this spiritual state, is not about “community or global transformation.”

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1027 In this way, the dispensationalist premillennial description of the Church as *parenthetical* or *intercalational* is not entirely foreign to the amillennialist position either, though in a far less prominent manner. The “spiritual kingdom” that describes the church age from Acts 2 to the second coming of Christ is marked by a pronounced difference in nature from what came before with God’s people Israel and with what will be fully realized upon the second coming. The church age is an insertion into history, into time even, without direct precedent or succession. However, because amillennialists do not obsess over the restoration of Israel, the parenthetical nature (with Israel on either end) is muted in comparison. The proof of the coincidence is the quote from MacArthur and Mayhue in the next paragraph that speaks to the mission of the Church in a near-identical way as TGC writers who hold to historic premillennialism and amillennialism.
1028 Storms, “The Restoration of All Things,” 267, 257, 258. MacArthur and Mayhue put it this way: “Though the physical kingdom of Christ on earth awaits its future fulfillment, the Lord Jesus brought an internal, spiritual kingdom at his first coming (cf. Matt. 13: 3– 52; Luke 17: 20– 21). That kingdom can be defined as the realm of salvation. It is open only to those who have been regenerated by the Holy Spirit (John 3: 3; cf. Matt. 13: 11– 16), having repented of their sin (Matt. 3: 2; 4: 17; cf. 5: 3) and embraced the Lord Jesus in childlike faith (Matt. 19: 13 – 14).” *Biblical Doctrine*, 2010–08 Kindle Location.
1030 DeYoung and Kluck, *Why We Love the Church*, 38.
vision that impinges upon the current reality of the Church, speaks to the nature and mission of the Church through negation. In the *missional* ecclesiological proposals, H-Cists see “too much ‘already’ and not enough ‘not yet’ in their eschatology.” Instead, the Church is about making “disciples of Jesus Christ in the power of the Spirit to the glory of God the Father.” The mission of the Church is not substantially involved in altering, enacting, initiating, inducing, or ushering in the millennial reign of Christ. It exists, straightforwardly, to:


The nature and mission of the Church is “focused not on changing the world but on the hope of eternal life.”

This conclusion echoes Hodge’s own as the “kingdom of God is not primarily a new order of society,” a mistake made by “the Jews in Jesus’ day.” This is not to say that the members of the Church are quietistic. Rather, by avoiding an overly “immanentized” eschatology that can be catalyzed through “programmatic fulfillment,” the H-Cists emphasize

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1031 Ibid., 39. For a critique of the “practice” ecclesiology of Jonathan R. Wilson as it is specifically shaped by his teleology, see Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 1020–32 Kindle Location. Driscoll and Breshears claim that C-M types promote a “naïvely optimistic overrealized [sic] eschatology that thinks [the Church] can fix all the world’s problems and usher in utopia.” *Vintage Church*, 61.

1032 DeYoung and Gilbert, *What Is the Mission of the Church?*, 265. This quote is taken from a fictional dialogue between a young church planter and an older established pastor and serves to underline the central theme of the entire book. In *Why We Love the Church*, the authors restate this general idea in many ways, claiming that Christians are “less the reincarnation of Christ in the world ushering in His kingdom and more His ambassadors bearing testimony to His life and finished work (2 Cor. 5:20)” (40). Or again, “We are not co-redeemers of anything. We are called to serve, bear witness, proclaim, love, do good to everyone, and adorn the gospel with good deeds, but we are not partners in God’s work of redemption” (49).


1034 DeYoung and Kluck, *Why We Love the Church*, 50–51.

1035 Ibid., 48.

1036 R. Albert Mohler Jr., “How Does It Happen? Trajectories Toward an Unadjusted Gospel,” in *The Unadjusted Gospel*, ed. Mark Dever *et al.* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2014), 1034–36 Kindle Location. Here Mohler is specifically concerned with the errors of the prosperity gospel, but the critique also fits into the wider error of an eschatological scheme that emphasizes the “already.”
the spiritual role of the Church of “[pointing] to God’s plan of cosmic reconciliation.” Word and deed ministry is the proper personal response to the gospel, not a genuine participation in the missio Dei. The plan of salvation that is spiritually at work in the regenerate members of the Church cannot be altered fundamentally by the millennial vision one adheres to – a rule that speaks as much to the nature of the Church itself as it does to the millennial options it precludes.

Structure

Analyzing the polity of the H-Cists is also challenging due to the diversity of voices. While Baptists and Presbyterians (and other Reformed denominations) have obvious organizational differences, there are also sundry intradenominational differences that add an extra layer of complication. As in the first section on the nature and use of Scripture, this type finds consensus less in the external details than in the overriding thrust of why there is cooperation at all when such structural diversity exists. There is an understanding that the outward organization of the Church is ultimately subjected to things indifferent. The differences then are not seen as insurmountable, because they arise from common theological presuppositions that take priority over these secondary concerns. Structure itself is a non-


1038 Thus, Dever claims: “One thinks of questions surrounding church government, qualifications for membership, or women serving as pastors and elders. Such issues of polity and practice may be declared ‘matters indifferent,’ and freedom may be allowed among different congregations for determining their own answers to these questions.” The Church, 2997–99 Kindle Location.

1039 Some TGC members would prefer to frame the cooperative effort in positive terms – fellowship is built on shared commitments, not a disregard for difference. The difference is simply perspective, however, as the following quote from Council Member Ligon Duncan displays: “Some still mistakenly decide that secondary matters are unimportant matters, especially if they pertain to ecclesiology. But the unity that results from this type of calculus is, ‘We stand together because our differences don’t matter that much.’ It is a shallow and shortsighted unity. One of the things I love about the generation of ministers represented at Together for the Gospel is that they know better… In spite of our differences on secondary matters, many of us have discovered a unity not because the truth doesn’t matter or because we have deemed important things secondary, but because we share profound things in common and love one another. So even though we disagree about important things, we rejoice in one another and in the shared theological commitments we hold.” Ligon Duncan, “Introduction,” in The Unadjusted Gospel, ed. Mark Dever et al. (Wheaton: Crossway, 2014), 84–92 Kindle Location (emphasis added).
negotiable, but entirely subordinated and arranged to accommodate the slogan “the message drives the mission.”

Organizational structures are always only supplemental to the gospel, never touching the essence of the Church, which is comprised of no more and no fewer than the called. Dever concurs, noting that it is “never appropriate for churches to remove their affections from one another over differences in polity,” but that a “healthy local church” will also inevitably lead to further “fellowship with other evangelical churches.” The principle of cooperation is rooted in the anti-institutionalism of an independent-interdependence, shared especially by the C-M and H-C types. This schema emphasizes the twofold local and universal church (though both types acknowledge a few intermediate referents within the New Testament usage of Church), where each local congregation is “understood as a local expression of the body of Christ—complete in itself.” Once again, Chandler, Geiger, and Patterson summarize all this aptly:

Each local church is a small reflection of the larger Church, the called-out ones from every tribe, tongue, and nation purchased with the blood of Christ who will eternally gather to declare the greatness of God. This local body of believers is made up of individuals with specific gifts and personalities who, by the providence of God, have been formed into one body in Christ (Rom. 12:5).

Sacraments

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1040 Chandler, Geiger, and Patterson, Creature of the Word, 2949 Kindle Location. This mantra is nearly the opposite of the C-Ms’, which asserts that the mission drives the message in a practiced sense. The H-Cists begin with a universal deposit of faith as the message (the gospel) and then seek to disperse it contextually within polity structures that adjust to the message, whereas the C-Ms begin with a mission that can speak a different message into various situations. Both have “flexible” polities, but there is a notable difference.

1041 The emphasis that TGC members have placed on κλητοί (“called ones”) in unpacking the nature of the Church (as εκκλησία) is also an unmistakable echo of Hodge (see chapter 1 section 3). The idea that the Church is circumscribed by its semantic referent – “the called” – undergirds much of the H-C theological reflection on the Church. For instance, see Chandler, et al., Creature of the Word, 878–80 Kindle Location.

1042 Dever, The Church, 1484–86 Kindle Location.

1043 John Crotts, Loving the Church: God’s People Flourishing in God’s Family (Wapwallopen, PA: Shepherd Press, 2010), 485–87 Kindle Location.

1044 Chandler, Geiger, and Patterson, Creature of the Word, 1449–51 Kindle Location.
By looking closer at their sacramentology, we can see how similar the 19th-century versions are to the 21st-century types. In the realm of baptism we find the greatest challenge to the unified vision of TGC, as it is comprised of a mixture of paedo- and credobaptists. Despite the different mode of baptism, however, the meaning is unified. Firstly, the members of TGC “stand with one another in rejecting baptismal regeneration.” Second, they want to avoid the opposing Zwinglian extreme:

Very often Christians who deny the doctrine of baptismal regeneration are accused of reducing baptism to a “bare sign,” that is, making it an empty symbol that “does nothing.” But this is not the case. Baptism is God’s means not to regenerate or justify us but to confirm his promise to us, put his mark on us, and assure us of his love, all of which serve to increase and strengthen the faith of the believer and thus promote our growth in grace.

However, they do not move far from a “bare sign” explication of the ordinance, focusing on the symbolic reminder of God’s promises and the boon it is to the individual’s faith. In the end, the most concise definition of baptism for TGC is that “Baptism is ‘a neon light flashing ‘Gospel, Gospel, Gospel.’” One should not expect to find “invariable objective efficacy” from the sacraments, they claim, on the proper side of the Tiber or the Bosphorus. In the end and leaving aside the mode altogether, TGC cannot insist on much more than this summary: “Therefore, being baptized does not make someone a Christian. Not being baptized does not cause someone to stop being a Christian. But a Christian should be baptized.”

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1045 Allison even uses Hodge in his own explication of the sacraments. See Allison, Sojourners and Strangers, 8668–69 Kindle Location.
1047 Ibid., 241.
1048 Ibid., 233. Original quote from D. Marion Clark in Give Praise to God, 171. Or, as Chandler, Geiger, and Patterson write, baptism is a “visual statement of the gospel.” Chandler, Geiger, and Patterson, Creature of the Word, 730 Kindle Location.
1049 Anyabwile and Duncan, “Baptism and the Lord’s Supper,” 249.
1050 Driscoll and Breshears, Vintage Church, 119.
Communion (or The Lord’s Supper), too, is recast in immaterial terms, pointing toward a gospel to be accepted via cognitive assent.\textsuperscript{1051} Communion is “an opportunity to surround ourselves with the powerful realities of gospel truth – the unleavened bread, a symbol of the purity and holiness of Jesus; the cup, the blood of the covenant, reminiscent of His great sacrifice as the pure and faultless Lamb of God.”\textsuperscript{1052} There is a “spiritual” presence of Jesus “through the indwelling Holy Spirit,” but certainly for TGC members, “Jesus is not literally present.”\textsuperscript{1053} In sum, the ordinances “apply the gospel to the hearts of the people”\textsuperscript{1054} and “are given to buttress and grow faith in the covenantal promises of God.”\textsuperscript{1055} They are offered in order to “refresh our memories.”\textsuperscript{1056} Highly individual and marked by a dualism that precludes the intermingling of the spiritual and material realities, Dever offers an apt conclusion:

As Protestant congregations replaced sacramental ritualism with gospel preaching, the sacraments (or ordinances) themselves took on another purpose, or really, their original biblical purposes—marking out the church from the world and providing a visible picture of the gospel message accepted by faith. As a result the church became defined… by individuals who personally believed the promises set forth in baptism and the Lord's Supper and who therefore participated in those rituals.”\textsuperscript{1057}

\textit{Constitution}

“The Bible is very clear,” announces Crotts, “that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Head of the church.”\textsuperscript{1058} This affirmation is the bedrock of the Church according to TGC members. “Everything comes back to Christ,” and in fact, “every member is riveted to its head.”\textsuperscript{1059} The

\textsuperscript{1051} Anyabwile and Duncan, “Baptism and the Lord’s Supper,” 243.
\textsuperscript{1052} Chandler, Geiger, and Patterson, \textit{Creature of the Word}, 730–33 Kindle Location.
\textsuperscript{1053} Driscoll and Breshears, \textit{Vintage Church}, 126. By “literally” the authors seem to mean \textit{materially} or \textit{substantially} present. The spiritual presence of Jesus through the Holy Spirit is unfortunately not unpacked further.
\textsuperscript{1054} Chandler, Geiger, and Patterson, \textit{Creature of the Word}, 728–30 Kindle Location.
\textsuperscript{1055} Anyabwile and Duncan, “Baptism and the Lord’s Supper,” 249.
\textsuperscript{1056} Ibid., 243.
\textsuperscript{1057} Dever, \textit{The Church}, 2717–21 Kindle Location.
\textsuperscript{1058} Crotts, \textit{Loving the Church}, 542–43 Kindle Location. This book was part of a recommended reading list on TGC website. As such, I take it to have at least an implicit endorsement from select TGC members.
\textsuperscript{1059} Timothy B. Savage, \textit{The Church: God’s New People} (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 26. For an excellent summary of the differences between Reformed Presbyterian and Baptist understandings of the foundation of the Church (as opposed to the differences outlined in their eschatological outlooks above), see Donald A. Carson,
though there appears to be a “nearly seamless” connection between the Head and the members as the body, it is crucial to recognize that the “church is also distinguished from Christ.” 1061 Jesus as the constitutional Head of the Church is only “to be metaphorically visible in the sense that we bear his name, his teaching, his gospel purposes, his glory, and his fame.” 1062 As with Hodge, Christ appears everywhere in the doctrine of the Church, at least rhetorically so, but one is left wondering if He is more than an absent monarchical figurehead who has left his regent (Holy Spirit) to the day-to-day management of the realm.

Though Christ is the Head of the Church and forms its representational crux, there are questions as to what ramifications this has. One thing it cannot imply is that the Church is an extension of the incarnation. 1063 In the interpretation of Allison and Castaldo, who view this understanding of the Church as endemic to Roman Catholicism, the “prolongation of the incarnation, mediates grace to nature to bring salvation,” and “the Church acts in the person of Christ, thereby mediating between God and fallen people.” 1064 This is ruled out theologically by the H-C type because it “misinterprets the biblical metaphor of the church as the body of Christ, nearly collapsing the distinction between the two so that Christ and the church become

“When Did the Church Begin?,” *Themelios* 41, no. 1 (April 2016): 1–4. The distinction is related to the emphasized continuity (or for most Baptists, discontinuity) between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant.

1060 Morgan, “The Church and God’s Glory,” 5029–42 Kindle Location. The soteriological excurses on “union with Christ” in chapter 2 section 1 should be kept in mind as undergirding TGC in an almost identical way. See also Chandler, Geiger, and Patterson, *Creature of the Word*, 3399-3401 Kindle Location; Morgan, “The Church and God’s Glory.” 5024-25 Kindle Location.


1064 Ibid., 103.
essentially one in reality.”1065 Instead, there must be a strong counter-movement recognizing that “he [Jesus] is not here, in the church, in the totality of his person,” but the “Holy Spirit as ‘another Helper’ (John 14: 16)… takes the place of Christ and continues his work among his people.”1066 Just as with Hodge’s concern over the “Jewish” misunderstanding of the gospel’s spiritual nature, Driscoll and Breshears echo Allison and Castaldo, concluding: “Simply, we reject the Catholic definition of the church as unbiblical, unfaithful, and unhelpful because it falls into the same trap as Judaism, believing that succession and not faith is the entry point into the community of God’s people.”1067 In this way, they aim to protect the sovereignty of God by not implicating the divine in the messiness of the Church as a continuing visible agent in history.

Christ is the Head, but in a purely representational way. Indeed, even the individual members who are “riveted” to the Head are so fastened by another: the Holy Spirit. The Church was not actually “born” until Pentecost, after Christ had “ascended to the right hand of the Father.”1068 Thus, the Church is birthed and inhabited by the Holy Spirit, though it centres “on the Word of God, Jesus Christ, who is its head, but he rules his body not from an earthly throne but from his exalted position at the right hand of God the Father.”1069 The Church is the “community of the Holy Spirit” because it is “commissioned” by the Holy Spirit, who works personally upon the members of the Church – “across varying denominational traditions and

1065 Ibid., 105. One must wonder why a “Head” and a “Body” should not be “collapsed” into “one reality”?  
1066 Ibid. The echo of the angel(s) in the tomb who tell the women that “He is not here” seems fitting. Though it may or may not be a deliberate allusion, the connection is clear: history moves in one direction, and Christ has risen and is no longer here in any substantial way except through the Holy Spirit’s agency and presence.  
1067 Driscoll and Breshears, Vintage Church, 43–44. For Hodge’s consternation over the errors of “Judaism” and the “Talmudic writers,” see chapter 1 section 2. Unlike Driscoll and Breshears, he does not make the connection to the Catholic Church in that context, but rather to the Millerites and others.  
1068 MacArthur and Mayhue, Biblical Doctrine, 20000–02 Kindle Location. See also Gerald Bray, The Church: A Theological and Historical Account (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016), 1. Allison prefers to speak of one single coordinated movement that cannot be parsed as the inception of the Church: “accomplished by the death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ, and created by the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.” Allison, Sojourners and Strangers, 633–34 Kindle Location. Yet there is still a suggestion that Jesus’ work clears the way, so to speak, while the Holy Spirit constructs the community.  
1069 Allison, Sojourners and Strangers, 12721–23, 12725.
theological persuasions” – bestowing the benefits acquired by Christ’s death on the cross.\textsuperscript{1070} MacArthur and Mayhue, note that “Souls were added to the church, one at a time, by the regenerating power of the Spirit as the Lord graciously drew individual sinners to himself.”\textsuperscript{1071} If such a construction of pneumatomatological priority is not similar enough to Hodge’s own, then the shared usage of Irenaeus’ dictum confirms the connection: “This is why the church father Irenaeus rightly said, ‘Where the Church is, there is the Spirit of God; and where the Spirit of God is, there is the Church.’”\textsuperscript{1072}

The true Church is made up of the elect, who have the “indwelling presence and power of God’s Spirit.”\textsuperscript{1073} These Spirit-indwelt individuals are bound together as one body or adopted into one family, unified by that same Holy Spirit.\textsuperscript{1074} The Spirit draws, unites, proclaims, and indwells the persons who comprise the Church. An extended summary by Wellum will help underscore the constitution of the Church among TGC:

As new covenant people we receive the benefits of Christ’s work in only one way: individual repentance toward God and faith in Christ. In salvation we are transferred by God’s grace and power from being “in Adam” to being “in Christ” with all the benefits of that union. To be “in Christ” (and thus in the new covenant, a member of his \textit{ekklesia}) means that one is a regenerate believer. The NT knows nothing of one who is “in Christ” who is not regenerate, effectually called by the Father, born of the Spirit, justified, holy, and awaiting glorification.\textsuperscript{1075}

\textsuperscript{1070} Driscoll and Breshears, \textit{Vintage Church}, 23.
\textsuperscript{1071} MacArthur and Mayhue, \textit{Biblical Doctrine}, 2003–04 Kindle Location.
\textsuperscript{1072} Driscoll and Breshears, \textit{Vintage Church}, 30. It is notable that, unlike Hodge, the authors do not excise the first portion of the quote.
\textsuperscript{1074} Driscoll and Breshears, \textit{Vintage Church}, 40. See also MacArthur and Mayhue, \textit{Biblical Doctrine}, 20072–75 Kindle Location. See also R. C. Sproul, \textit{What Is the Church?} (Sanford, FL: Reformation Trust Publishing, 2013), 452–53 Kindle Location.
\textsuperscript{1075} Stephen J. Wellum, “Beyond Mere Ecclesiology: The Church as God’s New Covenant Community,” in \textit{The Community of Jesus: A Theology of the Church}, ed. Kendall H. Easley and Christopher W. Morgan (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2013), 4515–20 Kindle Location. Wellum goes on to explain, in seemingly clear opposition to Hodge, that this summary is why it is difficult to accept a “mixed” Church as opposed to the visible Church as a regenerate collection of individuals. This tension among Reformed Baptists (though Wellum does not fit comfortably with most Baptists in his \textit{progression of the covenants} approach) and Presbyterians (and other Reformed) will be picked up in the following section.
Visibility

Questions of the visibility of the Church remain central to the H-C thinkers in the 21st century, despite some cosmetic differences among them. The apparent discrepancy arises from the baptistic insistence upon the Church as a regenerate community and not a corpus permixtum. When credobaptists insist that the Church is not a mixed body, they are commenting on the different nature of the Abrahamic covenant, marked by circumcision, compared with the New (Christian) Covenant, marked by baptism. This is disputed by Presbyterian and other Reformed evangelicals who believe just that: circumcision and baptism are equivalent signs in the Abrahamic and Christian covenants respectively. At root, the question is whether or not someone can be “in Christ” and not be a regenerate believer?

The question itself presumes an ecclesiological tension that is simply not present among TGC. Baptism for both groups is not objectively “regenerative,” and therefore evangelical paedobaptists understand “union with Christ” to be a part of the regeneration of the individual in the proper ordo salutis and not mechanically tied to baptism. Thus, in the end, both groups would answer “no” to the question above. Only if an elect individual is joined in union with Christ are they then de facto part of the regenerate.

This point, which may seem tangential to the ecclesiological question of the section, is spelled out here to identify two realities. First, when Baptists like Wellum avoid speaking of a “mixed” Church in places, they do so to protest a vision of the Church in which some covenant members are “united with Christ” but will not, in the end, be a part of the regenerate (saved). This, however, is not what the Reformed evangelicals of TGC understand to be the “mixed”

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1077 Wellum, “Beyond Mere Ecclesiology: The Church as God’s New Covenant Community,” 4520ff Kindle Location.
nature of the Church at all, because baptism is not effectual in fully uniting one with Christ. A covenant member (a baptized infant) is not inescapably united with Christ in a personal way. In short, these Baptists appear to be wary of an “error” that simply is not being perpetuated by the Reformed evangelicals of TGC. This leads to the second point. The fact that the Reformed evangelicals of TGC do not hold such views does not mean that all Reformed evangelicals would concur. All the Reformed evangelicals of TGC – Baptist and otherwise – are unified in opposing those such as the FV theologians who affirm the objective force of paedobaptism in regenerating the individual and fully uniting them to Christ. Thus, the baptistic concern over a corpus permixtum works both ways: it highlights the theological similarity and solidarity of the multi-denominational TGC, and it works to show the distance this group has from some other Reformed evangelicals who will be examined in the next section.

This clarification opens the way for substantial agreement. Even Wellum admits that “[in] any given gathering of the people of God are there not unbelievers in the midst, or even false professions of faith which then are viewed as the visible church?” If this is so, and he assures the reader it is, then there is “no doubt” that the Church is a “mixed entity.”

The point here is that the qualified corpus permixtum acceptable to TGC members is expressed in the very same way as Hodge himself:

A regenerate individual + other individuals = the visible Church (corpus permixtum); Or
A regenerate individual + other individuals – the unregenerate = the invisible Church.

There is even the same ambiguity between the visible and invisible Church. The invisible Church is mostly described as a numerical subset within the larger visible Church, but they can also be

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decoupled completely, indicating that the invisible Church may have members who are not part of the visible Church.\footnote{1079} This configuration is well depicted by Sproul:

> Imagine two circles. The first circle has “the visible church” written on it. That’s the outward, humanly perceivable, institutional church as we know it. The invisible church, as another circle, exists substantially within the circle of the visible church. There may be a few people in the invisible church who aren’t members of the visible church, but they are few and far between.\footnote{1080}

Two things need to be held in tension: the visible Church has no instrumental role in the \textit{ordo salutis} of personal salvation;\footnote{1081} and second, as Hodge put it, the visible Church at its best can help to \textit{show forth} the invisible Church to the world outside.\footnote{1082} Dever captures these both, writing, “Many Protestants have begun to think that because the church is not essential to the gospel, it is not important to the gospel. This is an unbiblical, false, and dangerous conclusion.”\footnote{1083} The visible local church invites, facilitates, and supports the spiritual growth of individuals.\footnote{1084} Therefore, even though the visible Church is not necessary \textit{per se}, or rather more accurately it does not have a constitutive role in the salvation of the individual, its instrumental value for discipleship is paramount.\footnote{1085}

Finally, there is a kind of \textit{invisibilis compago} which unites Baptist and Reformed members of TGC. This is the basis of the Church as a voluntaristic society – bound by a

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\begin{enumerate}
\item \footnote{1079} Cf. Sproul: “Before we consider the invisible church, let’s ask a question: do you have to go to church to be a Christian? Is church attendance, if you’re physically able, a requirement to go to heaven? In a very technical sense, the answer is no.” Sproul, \textit{What Is the Church?}, 2013, 206–07 Kindle Location.
\item \footnote{1080} Ibid., 217–21 Kindle Location. This is represented in an actual diagram: James Riley Estep et al., \textit{A Theology for Christian Education} (Nashville, TN: B&H, 2008), 241.
\item \footnote{1081} Driscoll gives a personal extended example of his own conversion in realizing that he “wrongly believed that the church was the mediator between me and God” and noting how he was “regenerated” in his College dorm room, “apart from any church.” Driscoll and Breshears, \textit{Vintage Church}, 43.
\item \footnote{1082} See page 216. Here there is an analogy with Dever’s oft repeated phrase that the Church makes the gospel visible. See “The Church Is the Gospel Made Visible.” Perhaps the fullest description he gives is: “Take away the church and you take away the visible manifestation of the gospel in the world… Christians, not just as individuals but as God’s people bound together in churches, are the clearest picture the world sees of who God is and what his will is for them.” The \textit{Church}, 3266–69 Kindle Location.
\item \footnote{1083} Dever, \textit{The Church}, 3261–62 Kindle Location.
\item \footnote{1084} Or as DeYoung and Kluck say elsewhere: “[Going] to church is not a quaint waste of time but an important and essential part of a person’s spiritual life and growth.” \textit{Why We Love the Church}, 69.
\item \footnote{1085} See Dever, \textit{The Church}, 3080–82 Kindle Location.
\end{enumerate}
profession of faith and not institutional rites or structures. It is a shared historical outlook that sees the Church as an imperfect agent through history, while viewing the gospel as the bond of those true Christians who endure the failure of this mixed body.\textsuperscript{1086} The authors of \textit{Creature of the Word} put this provocatively:

Augustine once said, “The church is a whore, but she is still my mother.” Throughout history, the Church has pursued other lovers, chasing after control, power, and misplaced agendas instead of pursuing Jesus and His mission. The Church has committed numerous atrocities in the name of God, neglected to influence the world in which God has placed it, and sold out to a myriad of causes other than the gospel.\textsuperscript{1087}

Seen through human eyes the historical Church is marred, having been complicit in and an active agent of sin. Yet God sees the Church through the gospel, and it is the perfect and spotless bride of Christ.\textsuperscript{1088} In this way, TGC does not attempt to evade the reality that “the church worships in the midst of sin, error, death, tragedy, persecution, temptation, heresy, Satanic attack, and hell on earth,”\textsuperscript{1089} but emphasizes the “spiritual essence of God’s gathered people.”\textsuperscript{1090}

This also speaks to the nature of the federative or interdenominational unity of the TGC itself. It prioritizes this invisible and spiritual bond that dismisses the search for visible, organic unity. Dever notes that though the “visible church is sadly mixed and divided,” the invisible

\textsuperscript{1086} This is, in a way, a move directly opposed to the Roman Catholic Church. Whereas the Roman Catholic Church has carefully avoided attributing sin to the Church as such, instead choosing to heap guilt on individual Christians, TGC members share a common predilection to drag the Church through the mud on account of her mixed nature, thereby guarding the regenerate members from the worst of the past. On the Roman Catholic aversion to attributing wrongdoing to the Church herself, see Ephraim Radner, \textit{A Brutal Unity: The Spiritual Politics of the Christian Church} (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2012), 121–23. Recent statements by Pope Francis have, however, asked forgiveness for the sins of both “the Church and its members.” See Pope Francis, “Press Communiqué: Audience with the President of the Republic of Rwanda,” \textit{The Vatican}, accessed March 20, 2017, http://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2017/03/20/170320c.html.

\textsuperscript{1087} Chandler, Geiger, and Patterson, \textit{Creature of the Word}, 1234–38 Kindle Location. The attribution of this quote to Augustine is acknowledged by the authors as likely mistaken, probably initiated by Tony Campolo in his \textit{Letters to a Young Evangelical}. See also DeYoung and Kluck, \textit{Why We Love the Church}, 211.

\textsuperscript{1088} See Allison, \textit{Sojourners and Strangers}, 12786–90 Kindle Location; Driscoll and Breshears, \textit{Vintage Church}, 46.

\textsuperscript{1089} Allison, \textit{Sojourners and Strangers}, 12786–87 Kindle Location.

\textsuperscript{1090} DeYoung and Kluck, \textit{Why We Love the Church}, 163.
Church “by its nature” is united and thereby fulfills the High Priestly prayer of John 17. The implications are clear: the Church exists to steward the gospel and to facilitate the discipleship of individual Christians. The external skin of the Church is pock-marked and cancerous, but the internal essence, demarcated by the gospel, will be revealed perfectly on the last day.

**Summary of the Hodge-Conventional Ecclesiology**

If there is an idea that the H-C ecclesiological type is comfortable rallying around, it might be the one offered by Wilson: “What we evangelicals (as a subculture) need is an evangelical ecclesiology, as an account of the church that holds us accountable to the gospel.”

In the very winsomeness of such an ambiguous claim, there is an implied subjection of the Church to the primacy of the gospel, which is always beyond the messiness of the visible Church (and society) here and now. The “the company of the saints,” as Piper calls the Church, is important only insofar as “it is tied to the good news itself.”

Witnessing to this good news of

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1091 Dever, *The Church*, 2063–67 Kindle Location. In the text Dever cites Wycliffe, Hus, Augustine, and the “Reformers” in general in support of such an idea. Then in a footnote he adds Calvin, Keach’s catechism, and the Westminster Confession (chapter 25), but leans heaviest on a quote from Louis Berkhof’s *Systematic Theology*. Ibid., 2155–57n1,2 Kindle Location. Elsewhere, he takes the consequence of such a spiritualized view of the true Church further when he claims that “denominations are good, not bad,” because they allow Christians to follow their conscience and avoid unnecessary conflict over things indifferent. “The Church Is the Gospel Made Visible,” 350–51 Kindle Location. For a similar take on the federative unity of Protestant churches from Hodge at the 1873 Evangelical Alliance in NY, see “The Unity of the Church Based on Personal Union with Christ,” in *History, Essays, Orations, and Other Documents of the Sixth General Conference of the Evangelical Alliance*, ed. Philip Schaff and Samuel Irenus Prime (Ann Arbor, MI: Making of America, 2000).


1093 This seems to vindicate Van Dyk’s conclusion that “Ecclesiology, it would seem, is not an explicit part of evangelical identity.” Leanne Van Dyk, “The Church in Evangelical Theology and Practice,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Evangelical Theology*, ed. Timothy Larsen and Daniel J. Treier (Cambridge: CUP, 2007), 129. However, other evangelicals who would not find themselves at home in this type would also make a similar statement. For instance: “evangelicals need an ecclesiology, and the ecclesiology they need is an evangelical ecclesiology, for the gospel is ecclesial.” John Webster, “The Church and the Perfection of God,” 87; Webster, “The Visible Attest the Invisible,” in *The Community of the Word: Toward an Evangelical Ecclesiology*, ed. Mark Husbands and Daniel J. Treier (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2005), 112.


personal salvation is the primary raison d’être of the Church, sustaining hope in the eschatological redemption of all things.

**Nevin-Retrieval Ecclesiology in the 21st century**

“Ecclesiology, the doctrine of the church… [has as its] central affirmation: Without qualification or hedging, the church is the body of Christ.”

Thus, Leithart introduces the overall thrust of the FV understanding of the Church. The connection to Mercersburg is unquestionable, as the FV contends that the Reformation was not “protesting” Roman Catholicism in toto, but was a “positive movement of the gospel” that at its best has retained the true catholic spirit of the Church through the ages.

Just so, they view themselves as the heirs to much of the early and medieval Church that was increasingly lost in the Enlightenment.

This vision portrays the “historic Reformed” faith as one that has “held a very high view of the Church.” Yet, in a manner very similar to Nevin, they do not view themselves as a fringe Reformed movement, but as the “middle of the mainstream of historic Reformed orthodoxy.”

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1096 Leithart, *The Baptized Body*, ix. It is also in this context that Leithart admits to being less “traditionally Reformed” than others in the FV and wants to “suggest revisions.” He confesses to being a “radical” in his desire to “drag conservative Reformed churches, all kicking and screaming into the twentieth century, the century of ecclesiology” (x). The reference to the 20th century is not a typo, as Leithart uses it rhetorically to bring into relief how out of date he feels the Reformed tradition is in regard to the doctrine of the Church.

1097 Wilson, *Papa Don’t Pope*, 65–67 Kindle Location. Wilson claims that the “original use of the word Protestant came from an appeal at the Diet of Speyer in 1529,” and that it was a political term directed against Charles V who was attempting to revoke the previous accommodations granted to “evangelical believers just a few years earlier” (55–57 Kindle Location). In this vein, Leithart writes, “To say, as some Protestants do, that the Roman church is not a Christian church is preposterous. If Rome is not a Christian church, what is it?” Peter J. Leithart, *The End of Protestantism: Pursuing Unity in a Fragmented Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2016), 171.

1098 See for instance Wilson, *Reformed* is Not Enough, 9; Steve Wilkins, “Introduction,” in *The Federal Vision*, ed. J. Steven Wilkins and Duane Garner (Monroe, LA: Athanasius, 2004), 12. This claim, unsurprisingly, is rebutted by many of their critics, who usually identify them as two-point Calvinists at best.


1100 Wilson, “Union with Christ: An Overview of the Federal Vision,” in *The Auburn Avenue Theology Pros & Cons Debating the Federal Vision*, ed. E. Calvin Beisner (Fort Lauderdale, FL: Knox Theological Seminary, 2004), 6. Similarly, Lusk notes that the FV is “something of a Reformed ressourcement movement… there is a ‘treasures old, treasures new’ dynamic at work in the ‘Federal Vision.’ It is forging ahead, even as it seeks to retrieve the past. It seeks to learn something new and fresh, even as it seeks to relearn the old and proven.” Lusk, “From Birmingham, With Love: ‘Federal Vision’ Postcards,” 156.
This is the vision for a “mere Christendom” that avoids the constriction of freedom wrought by the Roman Catholic Christendom of the pre-Enlightenment era, so alien to American Christianity, but retains its concrete objectivity in time and space. The following section seeks to confirm an ongoing N-Rist ecclesiological type within the 21st century FV movement.\footnote{Just as with the previous two sections, the connection is made theologically, not genetically. The convoluted history of Nevin’s adopted denomination, the German Reformed Church, is almost enough to dissuade one from attempting a historical connection to any 21st-century heir. After joining with the Evangelical Synod (themselves a joint Reformed and Lutheran synod), the E&R, as it was then known, joined the General Council of the Congregational Christian Churches in 1957 to form the United Church of Christ. Though a remnant of the UCC would uphold aspects of Nevin’s ecclesiology, the UCC as a whole has moved in a much more mainline liberal Protestant direction.}

\textbf{Bible}

The FV theologians have no aspirations of overturning the primacy of Scripture in favour of what they understand as the Roman Catholic teaching of the dual authority of tradition and Scripture.\footnote{Wilson, \textit{Papa Don’t Pope}, 602 Kindle Location.} Following Nevin’s own critique almost verbatim, the FVers conclude that “this debate really is about the way we read God’s Holy Word, far more than it is about the what that we are reading.”\footnote{Steve M. Schlissel, “A Response to ‘Covenant and Salvation,’” in \textit{The Auburn Avenue Theology Pros & Cons Debating the Federal Vision}, ed. E. Calvin Beisner (Fort Lauderdale, FL: Knox Theological Seminary, 2004), 87.} Certainly “[t]radition is to be honored and accepted,” admits Wilson, “but never absolutized, and never privileged above the plain statements of the Word of God.”\footnote{Wilson, \textit{Papa Don’t Pope}, 1554–55 Kindle Location.} Before turning to the prescriptive suggestions of the FV for biblical interpretation, we will see how their broad critique of many contemporary evangelicals sets the stage.

The criticism of many evangelicals’ understanding of the use of Scripture are rooted in Enlightenment understandings of individualism, which is, according to the FV, the “arch-heresy” of the Church.\footnote{Proponents of FV theology “who teach on the objectivity of the covenant tend to emphasize the dangers of individualism… [yet] the fact that we believe in a corporate covenant omelette does not mean we disbelieve in eggs.” Wilson, \textit{Reformed} is Not Enough, 57. Leithart echoes this pronouncement: “Religion is private: This is the heresy of Christianity in a nutshell.” \textit{Against Christianity} (Moscow, ID: Canon, 2003), 86.} This bankrupt form of “modern individualism” is apt to treat “the Bible as the Book that Fell from the Sky, for the sole purpose of providing all of us with raw material for our
Quiet Times.”\textsuperscript{1106} In arguing for a presuppositionless approach to the text, the individualistic evangelical reader, who is incessantly going on about the doctrine of \textit{sola Scriptura}, ends up being a slave to their own \textit{a priori} assumptions and predilections. In trying to be free from the strictures of tradition, searching for an unconditioned text to be read by an unconditioned reader, the always-already-preconditioned reader manipulates the text into a wax nose authority of their own liking. Whether this ignorance is a malicious obfuscation of Scripture’s message or not, the result is the same:

[Individualistic] Solo Scriptura maintains that the Bible is the only authority over “me,” and, fortunate for “me,” I am the only interpreter of the Bible who has any credibility and weight with “me.” In other words, solo Scriptura is “just me and my Bible.” And, human nature being what it is, it is not long before we wind up with “just me.”\textsuperscript{1107}

The condemnation resonates with Nevin’s critique of the Commonsense Realists. The root of both individualistic and Commonsense readings is what the N-Rists articulate as the naïve evangelical reaction to external authority and the unrecognized bondage of the reader of Scripture: “The cry of ‘Scriptures alone,’ misunderstood as it is, does not eliminate our traditions. It just makes them hard for us to see.”\textsuperscript{1108} Largely because of the claimed neutrality and objectivity of this type of Scriptural reading, the result is potentially far more disastrous than the still very real but more obvious dangers of an overly developed confessionalism (non-evangelical Protestants) or ecclesial hierarchy (Roman Catholics) that can subject Scripture to a procrustean bed.

\textsuperscript{1106} Wilson, \textit{Papa Don’t Pope}, 292–94 Kindle Location.
\textsuperscript{1107} Ibid., 1174–78 Kindle Location. The designation “Solo Scriptura” is deliberate. He uses “Solo” purposefully to contrast this understanding with a proper understanding of “Sola Scriptura.”
\textsuperscript{1108} Douglas Wilson, \textit{Mother Kirk: Essays and Forays in Practical Ecclesiology} (Moscow, ID: Canon, 2001), 62.
The answer to this modern individualism, according to the FV, is not to turn to some other ultimate authority like the magisterium.\textsuperscript{1109} There are, however, other sources of authority that help interpret Scripture’s final authority fittingly and the self-aware and self-critical reader of Scripture must bring them “to bear to help understand what the Scriptures are actually saying.”\textsuperscript{1110} The traditions of the Church herself act as an “inheritance” that both guards against misinterpretation and endows the contemporary Church with the riches of its own history.\textsuperscript{1111} After all, the Scriptures have been granted by God to the Church: they are the Scriptures of the Church.\textsuperscript{1112}

To receive this inheritance of tradition, however, one must rid oneself of the ignorance of this legacy and actually engage the teachings of the Church through the patristic, middle, and early modern ages.\textsuperscript{1113} Furthermore, it is not enough to know the historical commentary on Holy Scripture; it is also necessary to have a “coherent doctrine of history and the place of the Church in history.”\textsuperscript{1114} Without a philosophy of history that situates the Church in God’s cosmic reconciliation, the Bible becomes a “book that is suspended, in good arbitrary fashion, in midair.”\textsuperscript{1115} Thus, there is a mutuality between the Bible and tradition: though the Scriptural witness is always prioritized, it is buttressed by the external life of the Church as it reads and

\begin{footnotes}
\item[1109] Wilson, \textit{Papa Don’t Pope}, 477–78 Kindle Location.
\item[1110] Ibid., 1188–89 Kindle Location.
\item[1111] Wilson, \textit{“Reformed” is Not Enough}, 51. Of interest here is Wilson’s mention of Campbell: “Alexander Campbell, a leader in the restorationist movement of the nineteenth century, said that he endeavoured to read every passage of the Bible as though he had never seen it before. Of course this just means that he had a very short tradition” (51).
\item[1112] Ibid., 75.
\item[1113] Wilson, \textit{Papa Don’t Pope}, 1440–43 Kindle Location. Here Wilson speaks of how patristic sources are often used as a “cudgel” against evangelicals by Catholics and Orthodox Christians, even though they are rarely read and understood by all. His point is not that evangelicals can dismiss these critiques, but that all three groups ought to be committed to more thoroughgoing readings of sources from the history of the Church.
\item[1114] Wilson, \textit{Mother Kirk}, 31.
\item[1115] Ibid. Wilson outlines the ahistoricist problem of contemporary evangelicals: “And thus it is that a collection of books [the Bible] about the meaning of history, given within history, by various historical means, including the historical Church, has come to be revered by a group of evangelical saints with virtually no historical sense whatever” (31).
\end{footnotes}
interprets Scripture through the ages. In Wilson’s words, recapitulating Nevin, “The faithful and scriptural ideal is to have the organic life and the truth taught about that life from the Word line up. I agree with that completely: life first, then dogma.”

“The Christian faith,” concludes Wilson, “is not ‘a belief system.’” Interpretation of the Bible is not fixated on “explicit statements” or propositional truths extracted from Scripture that form a kind of “simplistic rationalism.” Instead, the FV is comfortable in developing an ecclesiology that confesses the “logically necessary implications of Scripture” that develop out of the text and its reception history. Alongside this necessary inferential reading is the even more vital typological reading of Scripture that “sees the whole Bible as gospel.” The Old and New Testament speak of Christ; and according to Leithart, the “Christ to whom the Old Testament testifies is the totus Christus, Head and body, Jesus and His Church.” In marked distinction from the H-Cists, though the FV understands the Bible’s ecclesiology to be rooted in the gospel, they have radically reoriented the meaning of the term to incorporate the Church: “The gospel is the story of the Church as well as the story of Jesus.”

**Millennium**

The FV theologians are self-confessed postmillennialists: Postmillennialism is the view that Christ will return at the end of the millennium. The millennium is generally understood as a golden age of gospel expansion, wherein the

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1116 Wilson, *Papa Don’t Pope*, 751–52 Kindle Location.
1117 Wilson, *Heaven Misplaced: Christ’s Kingdom on Earth* (Moscow, ID: Canon, 2008), 1557 Kindle Location.
1118 Ralph Allan Smith, *The Eternal Covenant: How the Trinity Reshapes Covenant Theology* (Moscow, Idaho: Canon, 2003), 237–39 Kindle Location. Schlissel articulates this further, arguing, “Reason requires a proposition as its object whereas Faith requires a history and/or a Person as its object.” Steve M. Schlissel, “A New Way of Seeing?” in *The Auburn Avenue Theology Pros & Cons Debating the Federal Vision*, ed. E. Calvin Beisner (Fort Lauderdale, FL: Knox Theological Seminary, 2004), 24. Propositions *per se* are admitted as one way Scripture communicates God’s Word; but, “it is an error, and a fatal one, to suggest that, once we have systematized the propositional content of Scripture, the result is a ‘worldview’ called Christianity to which we can give our assent, and there an end.” Leithart, *Against Christianity*, 14–15.
1119 Ibid.
1120 Ibid., 61.
1121 Ibid., 62.
Great Commission is fulfilled. At the end of that period of time, when the nations have all been brought to the discipleship of Christ, He will return and destroy the last enemy, which is death.\textsuperscript{1123}

The postmillennialism espoused by the FV is birthed from two parents: a progressive philosophy of history and Scriptural eschatology that emphasizes their anti-spiritualized gospel. It is unashamedly a form of “historical optimism.”\textsuperscript{1124} Members of the FV understand this progressive optimism in two similar but distinct ways, both of which have antecedents in Nevin’s own blended philosophy of history. Like Nevin’s Post-Kantian or Hegelian proposals that moved dialectically in fits and starts without a smooth progression, FVers like Leithart and Jordan have emphasized a negation-creation tension. Something akin to sublation occurs as God works within the world: “[The] church of the future is not continuous with the church of the present… The future is never a simple extension of the past and present.”\textsuperscript{1125}

Leithart and Jordan interpret the present as in some measure disjunctive from the past, yet still within the broad movement of historical progress. Thus, the claim that the “crisis of our times is of momentous historical importance” apes Nevin’s own understanding in the articles “The Year 1848” and “The Nations’ Second Birth” alike.\textsuperscript{1126} Put succinctly, the now of history can be of heightened importance, a crisis event, rather than a mere point on a smooth arc.\textsuperscript{1127} In this way, they both envision the millennium as something emerging out of the Protestant church(es), but certainly not an innate flowering of Protestantism. Indeed, the conclusion of both

\textsuperscript{1123} Wilson, \textit{Heaven Misplaced}, 1723–26 Kindle Location.
\textsuperscript{1124} Ibid., 43–45 Kindle Location.
\textsuperscript{1126} Unlike Nevin, however, the FV strongly criticizes those who propose an American “exceptionalism” (or “Eusebianism”), see Leithart, \textit{Against Christianity}, 69–70; Wilson, \textit{Heaven Misplaced}, 934–36 Kindle Location.
\textsuperscript{1127} Leithart generally refers to this as “epochal change” or “epochal shifts”: Leithart, \textit{The End of Protestantism}, 151.
writers is that the “power has run out of the Protestant form of the gospel”; yet, they insist, the
solution to this vacuity cannot be found in a return to Rome or Constantinople (or even Geneva
or Wittenberg).1128 Indeed, Leithart uses the same argument as Nevin, claiming that Rome fails
because the “ecclesial peace we seek is not behind us, but in front.”1129

On the organic side of historical progression – more in line with Nevin’s Romanticism –
are Wilson and Smith. The former’s succinct summary of postmillennialism reveals this clearly:
“Postmillennialism argues that the Church is in fact still an embryo, and that we will one day be
a perfect man. We are not yet that perfect man.”1130 The unfolding entelechy of the Church in
history is evidence of Christ indwelling the Church. It is a “process” of growth that matures
“over time” and will be complete in “perfected unity” (John 17:23) before Christ returns.1131
There is a positive gradual unfolding that appears much stronger than the sublation motif, though
even here a definite “no” to the past that is joined with the progressive “yes”:

In answer to the question, “Where was your Church before the Reformation?” the answer
is, “Where was your face before you washed it?” The Reformation was a reformation of a
portion of an existing Church, not the formation of a new church or denomination. I want
to argue that such an identification with the ancient and medieval church is necessary if
we are to avoid a cultic or sectarian mentality.1132

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1128 This has some semblance of Nevin’s eventual rejection of Newmania and his affirmation of an
eschatological vision that is something new, but not foreign to the present [Protestant] Church. Jordan, Crisis, 
Opportunity and the Christian Future, 312 Kindle Location. Jordan calls the option of return a “false and idolatrous
[answer] to the problem” (315, Kindle Location). Leithart is fighting a two-front war against those on the road to
Rome and a contented American civil religion (both “false catholicity” in his view). Though he finds some
provisional value in the current state of denominationalism, he sees an eventual “Christian catholicity” or
“Reformational Catholicism” ruling the eschatological horizon. Leithart, The End of Protestantism. Nevin refers
retrospectively to the power of Newman’s example of returning to Rome as Newmania in his brief autobiography:
Nevin, “My Own Life: Historical Awakening (XVI),” Reformed Church Messenger (1867-1874) 36, no. 24 (June
1130 Wilson, Papa Don’t Pope, 148–53, 155–56 Kindle Location.
1131 Smith, The Eternal Covenant, 356–58 Kindle Location.
1132 Wilson, Papa Don’t Pope, 453–55 Kindle Location.
These differences should not be smoothed over, but still the two different views of history are not mutually exclusive. They hold in some measure to the same assumption about the place of the Church in history. Nevin christened it the *interimistic* Church, and Leithart in *The End of Protestantism* has called it “An Interim Ecclesiology.” The *interim* or *interimistic* Church is *in via* to something full-grown in human history, before the last things. Thus, harsh judgments against certain eras of Christianity (eg. Christendom or Constantinian Christianity) are not only unhelpful but profoundly unchristian in their understanding of the Spirit’s work through the *totus Christus* in “medial time.”

Wilson, as he often does, uses a graphic analogy to describe the difference between the interim character of the Church in the FV understanding, as compared with a typical H-Cist type. In the latter’s view, “the world is God’s Vietnam, and the return of Christ consists of the few lucky ones helicoptered off a roof during the fall of Saigon. When we get out of here, then there will be good times – but not before.” There may not be pessimism “about final glory,” but “most Christians are pessimistic about the course of history prior to the Second Coming of Christ.” According to the FV, the pessimism or ambivalence of the H-Cists arises from their dualism by untethering the spiritual from the material. Because the Church is invisible, you cannot tell whether things are progressing by looking at history; there is simply no correlation. But the

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1133 Although Wilson is rather coy about why he is now (in 2017) rejecting the label FV, he does give a clue by admitting that “Peter Leithart’s ‘end of Protestantism’ [sic] project is going someplace where I am simply uninterested in going. Unlike some of his critics, I do not believe he is going to Rome, but I do believe it is a project, and it does have a destination. That destination is not mine. It is hard to reconcile his ‘end of Protestantism’ project with my ‘Protestantism forever’ approach.” Wilson, “Federal Vision No Mas.”

1134 See page 99-108.

1135 See chapter 1.

1136 Leithart, *Defending Constantine*, 342. This underlies much of Leithart’s defence of Constantine and his criticism of the Yoderian-Hauerwasian anti-Christendom thesis, which is heartily received by the C-M type.

Church is not “an invisible church in hyper-space,” it is the “future of the human race.”

The interim Church is marked by the visible, historical redemption of social, political, and familial structures en masse – a growing “mere Christendom.”

There remains, however, a difference between the contemporary Church and her perfected reality. Quite evidently, the Church has still not subsumed all of society; and things are “not the way [they] should be.” There remains the full reunion of “Roman Catholics, Eastern Orthodox, and Protestants,” and also by the radical grafting “back into the olive tree” of Jews.

In fact, all nations and families will one day be “incorporated into the New Jerusalem, the city of the new humanity” and this will be accomplished before the end of history itself. The postmillennialism of the FV insists that the Church’s members are tasked with “the presentation of a perfect man” in history – the totus Christus that has “grown up into the measure of the fullness of Christ.”

**Structure**

For the FVers there is no polity or ecclesial structure that is built entirely from expedience or jure divino biblicism. Instead, they are in search of the sacramental character of the early Reformers to uphold an ecclesial structure and authority that could bring the embryonic

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1140 Wilson, *Heaven Misplaced*, 1552 Kindle Location.
1144 Wilson admits that the “New Testament does teach us that government of the congregation is important,” but that it does not prescribe one particular form of government. He also argues that the ecclesial structure is discerned through the “authority” of the baptized members of the congregation. See Ibid., 520–23 Kindle Location. The challenge is that Wilson wants to affirm parts of both “expediency” and “jure divino” biblicism (largely unlike Nevin). The structure and polity of the Church is still considered only a part of the “bene esse… [and] a church may be mistaken on matters of church government (as well as many other secondary issues) and still be a true church of Christ” (47), while also agreeing that “all who admit that the church is a divine institution, of which Christ is the Head, must also acknowledge it must therefore be governed according to His Word, and by His authority.” Wilson, *Mother Kirk*, 164.
Church to maturation. Hence, Leithart argues that, “Far from yearning for a golden, changeless past, ‘ritualists’ are the most progressive of men, fearlessly facing the unknown future so long as they can take along their prayer books and water, their wafers and their wine.” The whole FV project is aimed at bringing “evangelicals back to more respectful worship” without slipping into an empty ritualism where “the assembled worshipers are spiritually dead… [and] all their liturgical accoutrements are just ornate carvings on the gravestones.”

Indeed, the FV is careful not to unnecessarily restrict the structure of the Church to one narrow manifestation, while also avoiding a celebration of a diversity that disregards the Scriptural and historical continuity providentially given by God. This complicated mix of priorities is apparent in Leithart’s recent work *The End of Protestantism*, where tension occasionally turns to paradox (contradiction perhaps) and highly imaginative envisioning. Here the crisis perspective of history meets with Leithart’s postmillennialism to imagine the formation of an organic ecclesial unity, without the encumbrance of fixed polity. Leithart boldly proclaims that the churches “are called to die to our division, to the institutionalized division of denominationalism, in order to become what we will be, the one body of the Son of God.”

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1145 Leithart, *Against Christianity*, 87.
1146 Douglas Wilson, *Against the Church* (Moscow, ID: Canon, 2013), 1980 Kindle Location.
1148 Leithart, *The End of Protestantism*. See especially his struggle with how to deal with unity and denominationalism: 4-5, 33, 51, 131ff, 166-67. He is adamant that Protestantism’s denominational presence is only historically provisional and the “Catholic church of the future will be visibly united… [with] organizational elements” (33). Yet he is certain that this organizational aspect will not be manifest in the Roman Catholic hierarchy, despite not offering any other concrete proposals.
1149 See also Wilson, *Papa Don’t Pope*, 96–97 Kindle Location.
1150 Leithart, *The End of Protestantism*, 165.
structure in the vision – the Church will simply be one as it becomes the true body of the Son of God.\textsuperscript{1151}

Attempting to navigate between the extremes of \textit{jure divino} biblicism and expedience is a hallmark of the N-Rist polity, as is the sacramental retrieval from early and pre-Reformation periods of the Church. And though the FV has in places been more prescriptive in their (small “p”) presbyterianism than Nevin was, the predilection to deflect questions of ecclesial polity, structure, and authority toward discussions of the divine ontology of the Church are unmistakably shared by the type.\textsuperscript{1152} The organization of the Church is not static, because God is moving His body through history and it is progressing through developmental stages. There is no universal polity, there can be no timeless structure, Roman Catholic Christendom is untenable. The Church must endeavor to rediscover its divine character, given in the incarnation, in order to advance the Church toward her full form.\textsuperscript{1153}

\textbf{Sacraments}

Rich Lusk’s chapter on paedobaptism begins with Charles Hodge’s 1857 article on the decline of infant baptism in the Presbyterian (Old and New School) Church. Lusk is perceptive enough to note that though Hodge laments this decline and calls for renewing the practice among traditional Reformed Christians in America, he also is a major part of the “problem” because of his low view of what the sacrament \textit{does}.\textsuperscript{1154} Interestingly – but perhaps not surprisingly – Lusk sees the antidote to Hodge’s view and the enduring response to the decline of paedobaptism in

\textsuperscript{1151} For a similar proposal see Wilson, \textit{Against the Church}, 96–97 Kindle Location.
\textsuperscript{1152} For the most engaged discussions of ecclesial polity that far surpass in detail and prescription anything Nevin ever produced on the subject, see Wilson, \textit{Mother Kirk}. Within this collection of essays, one of the more noticeable differences between Wilson and Nevin is the lower view of the ministerial office held by the former than the latter. This lower view of the clergy is not necessarily held by all members of the FV (Leithart, Jordan, and others wear clerical collars, for instance), but there is little intramural discussion to explore.
\textsuperscript{1153} This is what Wilson calls “organic and incarnational Christianity” as opposed to “propositional Christianity”: Wilson, \textit{Papa Don’t Pope}, 741ff Kindle Location.
none other than Nevin. 1155 “For Nevin,” concludes Lusk, “the real issue underlying the loss of infant baptism was the loss of baptismal efficacy and the loss of proper understanding of the Church as the living body of Christ.” 1156 Mark Horne also retrieves Nevin as a faithful starting place for a proper understanding of the Church’s Eucharistic theology. Notably he utilizes his claim that Christianity is not a “doctrine” but a “life.” 1157 Thus, claims Horne, “The Church is not a natural voluntary society, but a supernatural community… No wonder the Church’s sacraments are not merely human rituals either!” 1158

These two examples of FV theologians resourcing Nevin have a deeper resonance than simply the isolated sacramentology of the N-Rist type, revealing the more basic structure and authority of the Church: the extension of the divine life of Christ. As Lusk and Horne indicate, the primary culprits in their debates are the evangelicals who have exchanged the sacramental mystery for a disembodied rationalism. Old Princeton is their favourite whipping boy, as Wilson takes on Warfield’s sacramentology and concludes that his “pure supernaturalism” is “actually closer to a refried Gnosticism.” 1159 For those who find themselves “in the grip of individualism,” 1160 baptism and the eucharist help them “remember divine truth, profess [their] faith, stir up emotions… They are ways of expressing religious feeling and devotion.” 1161 This is the root cause, according to the FV, of expediency in the anti-polities of so many contemporary evangelicals.

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1155 Ibid., 83–88.
1156 Ibid., 88.
1158 Horne, “What’s for Dinner?” 143.
1159 Wilson, “Reformed” is Not Enough, 86. He later concludes, “Contrary to Warfield, baptism is efficacious” (105). Jeon takes exception to this interpretation of Warfield: Jeon, Calvin and the Federal Vision, 163ff.
1160 Wilson, “Reformed” is Not Enough, 92.
1161 Lusk, “Paedobaptism and Baptismal Efficacy,” 83. See also Leithart, Against Christianity, 85; Wilson, “Reformed” is Not Enough, 97.
Instead, the FV’s rallying cry of the “objective” covenant is grounded in a theological understanding of the union of the baptized with Christ.\footnote{Wilson, “Reformed” is Not Enough, 168. Here the difference with the H-Cists is obvious, as being in the covenant and being united to Christ are synonymous for the FV. Wilson makes this point unequivocally: “So again, when someone is baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, they are ushered into an objective, visible, covenant membership. Regardless of the state of their heart, regardless of any hypocrisy, regardless of whether or not they mean it, such a person is now a visible saint, a Christian” (194). However, the FV also admits that individuals can “reject what God is offering to them in their baptism” (104); thus, there are exceptions where “some who are not baptized will be saved, and not all who are baptized are saved” (105).} It is a “sacramental union,” wherein there is no equivocation.\footnote{Ibid., 89. With “union meaning union” he insists.} John Barach is critical of Reformed evangelicals who, in an effort to retain their 5-point Calvinism, propose that some baptisms are “apparent baptism[s]” and are more akin to “false labor” than new birth.\footnote{John Barach, “Covenant and Election,” in The Federal Vision, ed. J. Steven Wilkins and Duane Garner (Monroe, LA: Athanasius, 2004), 21. Barach traces this to what Kuyper calls schijndoop. Conversely, critics of the FV have noted how their understandings of baptism, union with Christ, the Church, and salvation are arranged in such a way that the “P” in TULIP (perseverance of the saints) is almost impossible to maintain.} But baptism does, in effect, “join us to the church,” and that “church is the body of Christ, not merely in some ‘honorary’ or secondary sense, but in a real sense.”\footnote{Leithart, The Baptized Body, 73. See also Wilson, “Union with Christ,” 5.} Though Leithart, unlike Nevin, demurs from calling the Church a “continuation of the incarnation,” he insists that it is truly “joined to the God man, is a new humanity filled with the Spirit of Jesus, and as such is the body of Christ.”\footnote{Leithart, The Baptized Body, 71. In this section Leithart takes away with one hand what he gives with the other. He affirms there is a “union-in-distinction of the personal and corporate body of Jesus” that can be “pithily expressed in Paul’s claim that the church is ‘the fullness of Him who fills all in all’ (Eph. 1:23)” (71). Leithart inadvertently makes an interesting connection with Nevin: “Calvin’s comment on this verse is striking as it is profound: ‘This is the highest honour of the Church, that, until He is united to us, the Son of God reckons himself in some measure imperfect. What consolation is it for us to learn that, not until we are along with him, does he possess all his parts, or wish to be regarded as complete!’ This is why, Calvin adds, ‘when the apostle discusses largely the metaphor of a human body, he includes under the single name of Christ the whole Church.’ Christ is no more separable from His corporate body than He is from His personal body. He is perfected only when to His personal body is added His corporate” (71). The interpretation of Ephesians 1:23 that indicates a “perfecting” aspect to the totus Christus was used by Nevin (though he never attributes it to Calvin): Nevin, “The Church,” 59. A discussion of this interpretation can be found above on page 181-82.} Consequently it is entirely appropriate to speak of baptism into the body of Christ as the “way of salvation,” being “[c]lothed in the crucified Christ.”\footnote{Leithart, “Modernity and the ‘Merely Social’: Toward a Socio-Theological Account of Baptismal Regeneration,” Pro Ecclesia 9, no. 3 (2000): 329.}
In sum, Leithart admits, the FVers’ theology of the sacraments is “not quite Protestant and not quite Catholic.” The visible signs are simply “what God does in His mysterious saving operations,” offering concrete, tangible gifts that embody His promises. None of this makes any sense unless it is understood in the context of the life of the Church, which is the very body of Christ stretching from incarnation to eschaton. “Since there can be no salvation without the Church,” because “indeed, the Church is salvation,” then it inevitably follows that “there is no salvation without the sacraments.”

**Constitution**

The consistent concern of the N-Rists, as alluded to above, is what they understand to be a rewarmed gnosticism that results from an overly developed “nature/grace dualism.” The utter separation of the natural world from the supernatural leads to an anti-materialism and a spiritualizing of the gospel, prioritizing the cognitive assent of individual believers. To avoid such an untenable outcome, the FV theologians have contended that union with Christ cannot simply be described in “legal” or “political” categories that isolate the representational relationship between Christ and the Church, but there must be an “essential unity” that joins them together. Wilkins gives a clear description of the FV’s apprehension of how the New Covenant moves beyond purely juridical representation – as in the H-C type – and toward an organic, personal, and mystical union:

> The covenant is not some *thing* that exists apart from Christ or in addition to Him (another *means* of grace) – rather, the covenant *is* union with Christ… There is no

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1169 Wilson, “Reformed” is Not Enough, 40.
1170 Leithart, *Against Christianity*, 94.
1171 Lusk, “Paedobaptism and Baptismal Efficacy,” 82.
1173 Wilson, *Papa Don’t Pope*, 135 Kindle Location. Beside the natural Head and body image, Wilson also uses Christ as the new Adam. This leads to the brief employment of a shared metaphor with Nevin – the Church as “the new Eve” from the very side of the “new Adam.” Ibid., 527–28 Kindle Location.
salvation apart from covenant simply because there is no salvation apart from union with Christ.\textsuperscript{1174}

This is an attempt to address what Leithart has called ecclesiological Nestorianism – the firm distinction made between the “all-too-human corporate body” of Christ on one hand and the “personal presence of the incarnate Word” on the other.\textsuperscript{1175} Just as with Nevin, the overt concern of the FV is that by affirming Christ as the Head of the Church, the hardline dualism would lead to a body that has been severed from her head.\textsuperscript{1176} Conversely, by accentuating the unified character of Christ and the Church, the priority of the \textit{totus Christus} results.\textsuperscript{1177} Relying on Nevin and Hodge’s favourite ecclesiological verse (Eph. 1:22-23), Wilson writes, “He is the Head of the Church, and the Church (in this sense) is the fullness of Christ, who is in turn the fullness of everything.”\textsuperscript{1178} There ought to be no “distinction” between the Church and the body of Christ, they are “interchangeable” figures of the same reality.\textsuperscript{1179} Leithart concludes,

Together, Anointed Head and anointed body make a single Anointed One, one Christ. Augustine’s idea of a \textit{totus Christus}, a “whole Christ” made of Head and body is not a fanciful fabrication of a Plotinian mind. It is purely Pauline. And this “whole Christ” is the visible, historical church.\textsuperscript{1180}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[1175] Leithart, \textit{The Baptized Body}, 69. Leithart admits that this follows from the “Christological Nestorianism” that is rampant, but always denied, in much of the evangelical world. The accusation of Nestorianism is reminiscent of Nevin’s comments toward Hodge in many places. See page 176.
\item[1176] Wilson, \textit{“Reformed” is Not Enough}, 77; Wilson, \textit{Mother Kirk}, 47.
\item[1177] Wilkins, “Covenant, Baptism, and Salvation,” 269. Here Wilkins tries to explain the FV’s understanding of the relationship between the decrees and the covenants of God – an area where the FV has been accused of being out of step with the Reformed tradition. The dispute is beyond the scope of this work, but it is noteworthy to connect it with Evans’ comment that Nevin relied on Calvin for his sacramentology, but Melanchthon for the decrees. Many of the FV too are often accused of \textit{synergism} (if not outright Pelagianism): Evans, \textit{Imputation and Impartation}, 174. For the critique of the FV on the decrees, see Engelsma, \textit{Federal Vision}, chapter 14.
\item[1178] Wilson, \textit{“Reformed” is Not Enough}, 73. Elsewhere Wilson riffs off the same verse, claiming that “Christ’s headship extends to us… astoundingly, we are the fullness of Him, the one who fills all in all.” Wilson, “Union with Christ,” 5.
\item[1179] Wilson, “Union with Christ,” 5.
\item[1180] Leithart, \textit{The Baptized Body}, 62.
\end{footnotes}
This emphasis on the unity of the Head and body blurs the Christ-Church asymmetry. One might accuse the N-Rists of promoting an ecclesiological Eutychianism in their attempt to avoid an ecclesiological Nestorianism. For instance, the Church as the “mode of the head’s appearance in the cosmos” or the as the “continuing manifestation of God in the world” are examples of the FV flirting with a direct equation of Christ and the Church – a line Nevin crossed on several occasions.\(^{1181}\) Leithart, again, provides the clearest articulation of these blurred lines:

First Corinthians 12:12 is particularly striking for the way Paul identifies the Head-and-members body of Christ as “Christ.” “Christ” is not just the title of the Anointed Head. The anointing flows like the dew of Hermon down to the skirts of the garments. Whoever is touched by that anointing in the Spirit (vv. 12-13) becomes a member of the body of the Head. Whoever is touched by that anointing is part of “Christ.”\(^{1182}\)

One of the difficulties in holding the FV’s conception of the Church is that they maintain an understanding of the growth and maturation in the visible Church through history,\(^{1183}\) while also contending for a constitution of the Church that is “ingrafted into the eternal community of the Trinity.”\(^{1184}\) The creatureliness or humanity of the Church is swallowed up by the divine (pneumatic-Christological) constitution; therefore, talk of maturation leaves questions about how these two realities cohere. If the Church is joined to the Triune God by being the body of Christ, then how is there an historical process wherein God also “sanctifies the Church over the course

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\(^{1181}\) Leithart, ibid., 62. Leithart is using an unattributed quote from Heinrich Schlier, the Roman Catholic convert of the 20th century, in the first citation.

\(^{1182}\) Ibid., 62.

\(^{1183}\) Wilson, *Mother Kirk*, 44.

\(^{1184}\) Leithart, *Against Christianity*, 70. This language is strong and not all FV proponents would be comfortable with it conceptually. However, it underscores the shared belief that the Church is “taken up” into the divine rather than the Divine “inhabiting” a creaturely reality. The difference is articulated with typical clarity in Webster, “Ressourcement Theology and Protestantism,” in *Ressourcement: A Movement for Renewal in Twentieth-Century Catholic Theology*, ed. Gabriel Flynn et al. (Oxford: OUP, 2013).
of history.” For Protestants, a strict divine ontology of the Church and a theory of development are difficult things to reconcile.

The divine constitution of the Church demands that, “The reunion of humanity in Christ is the gospel.” The conclusion is unmistakable: “God’s saving acts must produce a visible and historical community, and ‘salvation’ must be a description of the condition and life-together of this visible community.” Leithart continues, “The church is a thoroughly Trinitarian reality, not only a reflection of Triune communion but a participant in Triune communion… membership in the church is membership in that restored humanity.”

Visibility

The N-Rist type is a Protestant ode to “intrinsicist” ecclesiology. “Intrinsicism” is an “ecclesiology in which the church’s temporal visibility is intrinsic to the economy of salvation and its communication to creatures.” As Leithart states:

Ecclesiology is, I believe, the heart of the current debate [over the Federal Vision], and the heart of the heart of the current debate is the question of the visible and invisible church, or, to say the same thing, the question of the relationship between church and salvation.

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1185 Wilson, *Mother Kirk*, 47. By “sanctifies” he means the “process of removing sin… [wherein the] historical Church grows and matures over time.”

1186 For the “Reformed Catholic” difference from the Roman Catholic position on the indefectibility of the Church as such, see Wilson, *Papa Don’t Pope*, 270ff Kindle Location. By refusing to decouple or properly distinguish the members and body of the Church, the FV runs into the challenge of explaining the maturation of the Church as it is sinful and imperfect while it is also the very body of Christ and temple of the Spirit.

1187 Leithart, *The End of Protestantism*, 15. Here he is alluding to the conclusions of Rosenstock-Huessy. Note again the markedly different construction of “gospel” between the three types. For the FV the gospel is not an abstract noun but can be materially perceived: “preached, poured and eaten.” Wilson, *Reformed* is *Not Enough*, 80.

1188 Peter J. Leithart, “Trinitarian Anthropology,” in *The Auburn Avenue Theology Pros & Cons Debating the Federal Vision*, ed. E. Calvin Beisner (Fort Lauderdale, FL: Knox Theological Seminary, 2004), 69. Earlier he calls the visible, historical Church “already renewed” humanity.

1189 Ibid., 70.

1190 For a robust Protestant critique of “intrinsicist” ecclesiologies and an insistence that the “creatureliness” of the Church “goes all the way down,” see Webster, “Ressourcement Theology and Protestantism.”

1191 Ibid., 489.

1192 Leithart, “Trinitarian Anthropology,” 68.
The conscious move away from much popular evangelical ecclesiology is grounded in the FV’s shared aversion to “an ethereal, invisible, spiritual entity” that employs “church” as a semantic kadijan for a collection of Spirit-filled individuals who are invisibly united coincidentally by their personal salvation in Christ. 1193 The FV intentionally inverts this hypothesis: “Individuals are saved, but not individually; salvation is always a corollary of incorporation into totus Christus.” 1194 Ultimately the rejection of the invisible Church is an aversion to those evangelicals who end up with “two churches existing at the same time, with memberships not identical.” 1195

This “ontological” bifurcation of the Church leads to the pronouncement that the “true Church” is the “invisible Church, made up of the elect,” while the visible Church is ultimately disparaged. 1196 This has two inevitable and disastrous results, according to the FV. The first is that individuals feel no compulsion to partake in the visible Church, because their security is in the invisible realm. 1197 The second result is a corollary of the first and manifests itself in a disregard for unity: “It is common to say the church is spiritually one, even when it is institutionally divided…The true church, it is said, is an invisible reality that can coexist with visible conflict, division, estrangement, and mutual hatred.” 1198 In response, the FV holds that, “Membership in the Christian faith is objective – it can be photographed and fingerprinted.” 1199

Accordingly, the FV advocates for a purely historical distinction rather than an ontological distinction in the one true Church. Instead of the visible and invisible Church, there

1193 Leithart, *The End of Protestantism*, 22. Leithart insists that this error need not be monopolized by evangelical Christians. It manifests itself in other Protestants and even some Roman Catholics and Eastern Orthodox. See also Wilson, “Reformed” is Not Enough, 69.
1195 Wilson, “Reformed” is Not Enough, 70. See also “A Joint Federal Vision Profession.” The concern among FV membership is an existence of two separate churches or two “membership rosters” that have no essential correlation. See also Leithart, The Baptized Body, 59.
1196 Wilson, “Reformed” is Not Enough, 74.
1197 Ibid., 70. Leithart writes, “A central contention of the ‘Federal Vision’ position is that Reformed theology, with its strong doctrine of God’s sovereignty and absolute election, has sometimes neglected the significance of the visible church, its ministries, and its sacraments.” *The End of Protestantism*, 18.
1199 Wilson, “Reformed” is Not Enough, 21, 31.
is exists the historical and eschatological Church. Within this schema there is room to admit
that the entire Church is not “visible” at one time and in one place, while also leaving no excuse
for individuals to avoid participating in the institutional Church: the historical visible Church is
the true Church because it is the only Church. But perhaps the strongest result is the shared
concern for the historical Church to work toward visible unity prior to the coming eschatological
Church. “An invisible unity is not a biblical unity,” because the Bible knows nothing of invisible
Christians or an ethereal Church. Leithart summarizes the concern:

disunity of the church is a disease in Christ’s body, a shattering of the Spirit’s temple. We
must utterly reject ecclesiology that imply indifference to visible division. We cannot
exonerate the church by treating division as extra-ecclesial, ecclesiology that imply that
“the ‘Church as such’ is never divided.”

To lose sight of this, claims Leithart (quoting Nevin), is to “make shipwreck of the gospel.”

There is a visible, historical succession of the Church; accordingly, the “earthly history
[of the Church] is eternally significant.” Still, the Church is an ecclesia mixta. Wilson claims
that the visible Church is like a “dragnet that brings in all kinds of fish, beer bottles, and a
bicycle tire [together]… The tares in the wheatfield are not behaving, but of course, they never do.\textsuperscript{1206} The presence of the tares in the wheat field are an “incongruity,” in some sense, as the historical Church progresses to the eschatological Church where the “spots and blemishes” will be removed entirely.\textsuperscript{1207} Once these tares have been “cut off and burned,” the Church will be comprised solely of the elect: members who were never invisible along the way.\textsuperscript{1208}

This historical Church will not only be marked by the purification of her members, but eventually also by the visible reunification of all churches.\textsuperscript{1209} The historical Church on its way, micro or mere Christendom, to the eschatological Church is both motivated by this final vision of unity and called to proclaim and actively work toward the realization of just such a vision of the gospel of Christ.\textsuperscript{1210} Wilson puts it this way:

There is an essential unity in an embryo, but there is also a much higher unity toward which the embryo is growing. Many complaints about the “disunity” of the Church are actually complaints about how God knits in the darkness of the womb. We look over His shoulder and have the temerity to criticize what He is doing there.\textsuperscript{1211}

In proclaiming and working toward the progressive gathering of the Church, there is an affirmation that such an historical Church is, itself, salvation “in social form.”\textsuperscript{1212} And here is the crucial point that comes full-circle to the accusation of promoting an “intrinsicist” ecclesiology: This one visible, social, and historical Church “is neither a reservoir of grace nor an external support for the Christian life. The Church is salvation.”\textsuperscript{1213}

\textit{Summary of the Nevin-Retrieval Ecclesiology}

\textsuperscript{1206} Wilson, \textit{Papa Don’t Pope}, 512–15 Kindle Location.
\textsuperscript{1207} Wilson, “Reformed” is Not Enough, 175.
\textsuperscript{1208} Barach, “Covenant and Election,” 23.
\textsuperscript{1209} Wilson, \textit{Papa Don’t Pope}, 166 Kindle Location. Leithart, arguing for the same vision of a united Church before the second coming of Christ, admits that “there is something to the utopian charge.” Leithart, \textit{The End of Protestantism}, 169.
\textsuperscript{1210} Leithart, \textit{The End of Protestantism}, 17. See also Wilson, “Union with Christ: An Overview of the Federal Vision,” 5.
\textsuperscript{1211} Wilson, \textit{Papa Don’t Pope}, 135–38 Kindle Location. See also Wilson, “Reformed” is Not Enough, 121.
\textsuperscript{1212} Leithart, \textit{The End of Protestantism}, 17.
\textsuperscript{1213} Leithart, \textit{Against Christianity}, 4. See also Leithart, “Trinitarian Anthropology,” 69–70.
Under the heading “The Church” in the *Joint Profession*, the contributors conclude:

We affirm that membership in the one true Christian Church is visible and objective, and is the possession of everyone who has been baptized… We affirm one holy, catholic, and apostolic church, the house and family of God, outside of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation.\(^{1214}\)

They argue that this “high ecclesiology” is nothing more than the historic teaching of Augustine and Calvin, which was tragically “eclipsed in conservative Reformed theology, particularly in the United States,” to such a degree that “the great Princetonian B. B. Warfield could say that the Reformation was the triumph of Augustinian soteriology over Augustinian ecclesiology.”\(^{1215}\)

Such a bankrupt dichotomy between soteriology and ecclesiology, maintain the FV thinkers, has run its course, and the “time seems ripe for seismic reconfiguration” in the Church.\(^{1216}\) A *new thing* is needed! This is not a return *back* to Rome or even to the church of the early Reformers.\(^{1217}\) Instead, it is an attempt to get behind the Enlightenment in order to chart a new path for the Church as the body of Christ in its soteriological scope and eschatological fruition.\(^{1218}\) Wilkins insists that the “Church has been reduced to an institution that is merely a place of potential blessing” instead of what God intended it to be as “the Spirit-filled, blessing-filled body of Christ.”\(^{1219}\)

**Conclusion**

*New Evangelical Ecclesiologies?*

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\(^{1214}\) “A Joint Federal Vision Profession.”

\(^{1215}\) Leithart, “Presbyterian Identity Crisis.”

\(^{1216}\) Leithart, *The End of Protestantism*, 151.

\(^{1217}\) Leithart, cribbing off Bonhoeffer’s famous saying about discipleship, writes, “Jesus bid Protestantism to come and die.” Ibid., 6. Near the end of the book, he clarifies this sentiment further, “I hope to see fragmented Protestantism, anti-liturgical and anti-sacramental Protestantism, thinly biblical Protestantism, anti-doctrinal and anti-intellectual Protestantism, anti-traditional Protestantism, rationalist and nationalist Protestantism slip in the grave – and I will not hesitate to turn that grave into a dance floor. Insofar as these are the things that make Protestants Protestant, I am hoping for the death of Protestantism… If Protestant churches must die, they die in faith that they will be raised new, more radiant with glory than ever” (191).

\(^{1218}\) See, for instance Wilson, *Reformed* is *Not Enough*, 44.

\(^{1219}\) Wilkins, “Introduction,” 11.
Before moving into the final conclusion of the dissertation, it is worthwhile summarizing what has been laid out in this final chapter. We began with an explanation of why a theological typology was an appropriate tool for a work of this nature – particularly in light of how many generalized categorizations have been used within evangelical ecclesiology and how unhelpful they have been. After this, I outlined my proposed typology in greater detail; and once the three types had been circumscribed, test-cases in the form of three contemporary evangelical movements were engaged to measure the typology’s contemporary applicability and fittingness. The overriding result of this final chapter is that, for all their rhetorical flourish, all three contemporary evangelical movements have failed to break out of the theological bounds of the types from the antebellum period. The goal, however, was not merely to find corresponding evangelical movements that fit within the types, but to show that despite the repeated claims that something new was needed in the post-Christian context of the 21st century – the post-9/11 world – the enduring types still perpetuated the same theological configurations. If evangelicals are making claims of ecclesiological originality in the 21st century, they are mistaken.
Conclusion

This dissertation began by accepting various historical conclusions that affirmed that something unique in antebellum America has shaped evangelicals in an enduring way. This work explored the spectrum of antebellum evangelicals by examining the prototypical thinkers of Alexander Campbell, Charles Hodge, and John Williamson Nevin through an ecclesiological lens. The impact of five theological categories was explored in relation to their ecclesiology: the Bible, the Millennium, Structure and Authority, Christological and Pneumatological Constitution, and Visibility. With the results of this thoroughly inductive exploration, the third chapter constructed a typology composed of three ecclesiological ideal types that existed among antebellum evangelicals, with the three representational thinkers as the prototypes. Finally, from this typology a contemporary comparison was made to three popular evangelical groups in the 21st century. The objective was not to make claims of historical connectivity between the 19th-century prototypes and the 21st-century groups, but to show that the same evangelical types are also apparent, with striking theological similarity, more than a century and a half later.

The claim that three evangelical ecclesiological types have maintained their distinctions in the 21st century has occupied the bulk of the research. However, numerous conclusions have been left uninterpreted that deserve to be sketched out at the end of a work of this nature. It seems to me that two different conclusions need to be drawn from a study like this: first from the three types collectively, second from the specificity of the three types internally. This distinction is rooted in a much-debated point of historiographical difference in evangelical theology. The debate surrounds the aversion to the term evangelicalism (as with Mark Noll and others) in
contrast to an insistence on its validity (as with David Bebbington and others). Though it seems entirely appropriate to refer to the C-M, H-C, and N-R types as “types of evangelical ecclesiology” in the plural, it is debatable whether referring to them collectively as an ism (evangelicalism) brings further clarity or confusion. There is a certain irony to this admission, as it affirms Noll’s suspicion of Bebbington, who tends to speak of evangelicalism as an “entity with agency” – something I too question based on the particularism of the preceding inductive study. And yet the preceding dissertation, developed around a constructed typology, is also a work of a “lumper” rather than a “splitter,” to use Noll’s borrowed categorization of historians. For example, though there is no such thing as the Hodge-Convention type as an “entity with agency,” there are certainly advantages to using the type as a heuristic tool, just as there are with the category “evangelicalism."

Still, to speak of a cohesive movement that can be identified in the singular as “evangelicalism” seems to smooth over far too many differences. The most poignant example of this is Nevin himself. By Bebbington’s quadrilateral standards of evangelicalism (biblicism, activism, conversionism, crucicentrism), he fits within the matrix only awkwardly – especially because of his different emphasis on the Bible, conversion, and his preference to speak of the incarnation rather than the crucifixion. By Larsen’s historical rubric he is also a difficult fit, finding a home in the German Reformed Church, which has no substantial historical connection

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1222 For Bebbington’s quadrilateral of Biblicism, Crucicentrism, Conversionism, and Activism, see D. W Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London; New York: Routledge, 1993). Even Campbell’s preference for the resurrection rather than the crucifixion raises questions about the “Crucicentrism” mark of Bebbington’s.
to the 18th-century revivals in America. Even by Marsden’s “transdenominational” marker, it is a challenge to see how Nevin’s repugnance of the sects would fit. And yet, despite his strong aversion to revivalistic evangelicals, Nevin regularly referred to himself as an evangelical (or catholic evangelical), seemingly without the assumption that all evangelicals could be lumped together in a single category. I have found it difficult to uphold a rubric sufficiently broad enough to incorporate all evangelicals that does not dilute the coherence to such a degree that the category is void of any constructive purchase.

What if we take the broadest of all categorizations of evangelicalism as a “family resemblance”? Johnston claims that for “all of their variety and particularity, descriptions of contemporary American evangelicalism” can be held together in a family resemblance model that focuses on the centrality of their understanding of the gospel. But notice how different the understanding of the gospel is between the three types examined. For the H-C type it is unmistakably a gospel of personal salvation from sin, emphasizing justification by grace; for the C-M the gospel is a comprehensive reconciliation of all things in Christ, the social undoing of personal and systemic sin; while for the N-R there is a strong equation of the gospel and the Church, salvation in objective and social form. To speak of a family resemblance among evangelicals, whether as a “definition” or a “description” of evangelicalism, fails to comprehend

1223 For Larsen’s historical lens through which to understand evangelicalism as a movement, see Timothy Larsen, “Defining and Locating Evangelicalism,” in The Cambridge Companion to Evangelical Theology, ed. Timothy Larsen and Daniel J. Treier (Cambridge: CUP, 2007). Larsen, like Marsden below, does not deny the doctrinal coherence among evangelicals as an important identifier (inspiration of Scripture; atonement from sin through Jesus’ death and resurrection; work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer, etc.); however, he places alongside this the necessity of finding oneself “in the tradition of the global Christian networks arising from the eighteenth-century revival movements associated with John Wesley and George Whitefield” (1). Without the historical rubric for defining evangelicals, claims Larsen, St. Francis of Assisi could easily conform to the marks outlined by Bebbington (2).

1224 George Marsden, Evangelicalism and Modern America (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1984). Marsden’s point is that part of what shapes evangelicalism is not simply the total sum of evangelicals existing separately, but the cross-denominational connections – both institutionally and relationally – that bind them into “something like a denomination, although a most informal one” (xvi).

the inherent differences within their understandings of the gospel itself.\textsuperscript{1226} All of this presumes that speaking of a singular evangelical ecclesiology is untenable. There are evangelicals, and they have various types of ecclesiology, but to speak of evangelical ecclesiology as \textit{a thing} in the singular is ultimately misleading, or at least fails to nuance the larger category sufficiently.

While evangelicalism may not be an “entity with agency,” there is something common among the types of evangelicals. Though they arrange their priorities in different ways, they all reject universal and timeless institutional structures, all prioritize Scripture, and they all avoid a direct equation between a particular visible, historical Church and the eschatological reality of the saints in heaven. As has already been noted above, this shared commonality largely manifests itself through a \textit{via negitiva} – a common ground in what they are \textit{not} rather than what they \textit{are}. It is appropriate in a certain way to assert that these types are evangelical because they are all strongly anti-Erastian and institutionally ambivalent, which often reaches its pinnacle in expressions of anti-Catholicism. Here we see how the Bible Riots and the anti-Catholic reaction to 9/11 are not simply illustrative of certain evangelical traits, but are materially important to the ecclesiological DNA of evangelicals.

\textbf{Evangelicalism in Context: External Implications}

With this in mind, this conclusion will explore two further sets of consequences from the study: first, the external implications of evangelicals’ shared evangelicalism; and second, the internal implications of three distinct and enduring ecclesial types of evangelicals. Why does it matter that all three ecclesiological types hold a \textit{singular} repugnance to certain theological options; and furthermore, why does it matter that there are \textit{three} distinct evangelical ecclesiological options?

\textsuperscript{1226} Johnston wonders whether a “Definition” of evangelicalism is too much to ask and a “Description” is a more helpful way to speak of the family resemblance. Ibid., 260.
One of the strongest results of this study is the reality that ecclesiology itself is clearly a more central discipline for evangelicals than most scholars have assumed. At best, scholars like Michael McClymond have noted that evangelical ecclesiology is “a weak point.”\textsuperscript{1227} At worst, some serious evangelical scholars have pondered whether the idea is an “illusion”\textsuperscript{1228} or even, perhaps, an “oxymoron.”\textsuperscript{1229} Certainly the disproportionate number of H-C evangelicals has sometimes given rise to this critique, as they emphasize the invisible Church and a personal faith that can and often does minimize ecclesiological aspects. This is occasionally theological neglect, but more often it is a conscious and purposeful choice to situate the doctrine of the Church in its proper position and proportion within the H-C’s wider theological understanding. Nevertheless, Nevin’s claim that “The great question of the age undoubtedly is that concerning the church”\textsuperscript{1230} could be affirmed again in the 21\textsuperscript{st} century among most evangelicals.\textsuperscript{1231} Perhaps evangelicals are simply late to the party, as the 20\textsuperscript{th} century was supposedly the century of the Church,\textsuperscript{1232} but there is no doubt that within the two timeframes, extensive ecclesiological discussions are underway among evangelicals. To suggest that evangelicals are anti-ecclesiological is reductionist and perpetuates stereotypes. This work, especially through the construction of its typology, is a theological exploration that is being put forward as a launching


\textsuperscript{1228} John G. Stackhouse Jr., Evangelical Ecclesiology: Reality or Illusion? (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003).

\textsuperscript{1229} Bruce Hindmarsh, “Is Evangelical Ecclesiology an Oxymoron? A Historical Perspective,” International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church 7, no. 4 (November 1, 2007): 302–22. Hindmarsh’s use of oxymoron has to do with the push of evangelicals for spiritual unity in the midst of their visible splintering and sectarianism. In most ways, he assumes there are only H-C evangelicals.


\textsuperscript{1231} Richard Beaton has suggested this is a renewed interest in the 21\textsuperscript{st} century: “Reimagining the Church,” in Evangelical Ecclesiology: Reality or Illusion?, ed. John G. Stackhouse (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003), 217.

\textsuperscript{1232} The original designation was made by Otto Dibelius in his 1927 book of that title: Das Jahrhundert der Kirche: Geschichte, Betrachtung, Umschau und Ziele (Berlin: Furche-Verlag, 1927).
place for more and better examination of evangelical ecclesiology, rather than the continuation of clichés and ready-at-hand worn-out labels. Moreover, it has convincingly shown that in order to understand the broader theological and social action of disparate evangelicals, their ecclesiology must be considered – it is not incidental or superfluous, but at the very core of evangelical identity, even for those who deliberately hold to an ecclesiological minimalism.

The study, however, has aimed at doing more than rehabilitating evangelical ecclesiology to a legitimate place of theological study. In uncovering the three types of evangelical ecclesiology, it has also shown areas of commonality. Here we must return to the epigraph at the beginning of this section from Noll and Nystrom, which concludes that the enduring separation between evangelicals and Catholics is centered upon the Church itself.\textsuperscript{1233} This is true not simply for one or two of the types, but for all three, which makes it an important claim on the overarching (or perhaps underlying) thesis of this work. Noll and Nystrom are in full agreement with the conclusions presented here when they affirm that this is nothing \textit{new}, as the ecclesiological divide between evangelicals and Catholics is found throughout American history, including the colonial wars when the “reputation of Catholicism as a promoter of tyranny contributed to the first stages of the American love affair with liberty.”\textsuperscript{1234} They assert that this anti-Catholicism – “sometimes of the rabid variety” – continued into the antebellum era and became “one of the main engines of the reform movements that galvanized American Protestants.”\textsuperscript{1235} Their conclusion is that “active anti-Catholicism in the nineteenth century was sparked especially by the belief that the Catholic hierarchy discouraged, or even prohibited, the use of Scripture among the laity,” a belief that then “led to the conclusion that Catholicism was

\textsuperscript{1233} Noll and Nystrom, \textit{Is the Reformation Over?}, 237.
\textsuperscript{1234} Ibid., 45.
\textsuperscript{1235} Ibid., 46.
inimical to the American way of life.”\textsuperscript{1236} This could well have been a summary statement for the Bible Riots themselves. It also happens to be the crux of ongoing anti-Catholicism among evangelicalism.

In an impressive review panel of Noll and Nystrom’s book \textit{Is the Reformation Over?}, four scholars debate the overall merits of the work. They agree that the remaining divide between evangelicals and Catholics in the 21\textsuperscript{st} century is primarily ecclesiological, just as the authors suggest. However, I would like to use the respondents’ differing interpretations as a way to articulate exactly what I see, based on the research above, as the commonality of the three types under examination and why it ultimately matters. First, the Catholic convert from evangelicalism, Peter Huff, is quick to point out that there are “gaps” in Noll and Nystrom’s work that arise because of a “failure to acknowledge fully the role that the Enlightenment legacy has played in distinguishing Anglo-American evangelicalism.”\textsuperscript{1237} This is not a theme that has been examined at length within my work, though it was outlined at the beginning for contextual clarity. Though he overstates the connection to evangelicalism – putting it in causal form, with evangelicalism as the “product” of the Enlightenment – Huff clearly has a grasp of the connection between the so-called American Didactic Enlightenment, the rise of Commonsense Realism, and antebellum evangelicals. The insatiable search for the new comes eerily close to a lust for progress among evangelicals, something they have not always been shy about promoting, as we have seen particularly among the C-M and N-R. The flip side is the corollary that the stuffy and “backwards looking” Roman Catholic Church is either regressive, oppressive, or both – an \textit{unenlightened} institutional rigidity that arrests the freedom of the rational individual. This connection helps shed light on the type of freedom that evangelicals collectively have sought: a

\textsuperscript{1236} Noll and Nystrom, \textit{Is the Reformation Over?}, 48.
\textsuperscript{1237} Peter Huff, “Review Symposium: Is the Reformation Over?,” \textit{Horizons} 34, no. 2 (Fall 2007): 340.
freedom from the strictures of any external authorities. Thus, as we will show momentarily in more depth, evangelicals have leveraged institutions in ad hoc ways and even leaned on them extensively to further their mission for the gospel, but they are careful to avoid institutional impingement on the freedom of individual Christians and quick to dispose of institutions that take on binding or seemingly authoritarian characteristics. However helpful Huff’s assessment is on the connection between evangelicals and the enlightenment, in the end it is not sufficiently broad in scope. Huff also fails to account for the spiritual piety and supernaturalism of the evangelicals in each of the three types, something that goes beyond pure rationalism. Unlike the early persecutions of Catholics in England and parts of the continent, American evangelicals railed less against the “irrational and superstitious” aspects of the Roman system and paid much closer heed to the authoritarian and despotic concerns. In the end, Huff’s response is only partially germane to the evangelical ecclesiology writ large.

William Shea, a veteran on the topic of evangelicals and Catholics, provides a dose of realism that doubles down on Noll and Nystrom’s assessment. He claims that because of his vast experience mediating between these two groups, he now thinks that the “divide over the nature of the church is unbridgeable.” And while the Catholic theologian and historian is largely sympathetic with the evangelical critiques of the entrenched institutionalism and “over-growth” of ecclesial authority – describing his own tradition as being “stuck with an Überkirche” – Shea sees no salvific solution to the impasse in the baptismal tanks of American evangelicalism. Shea’s pessimism might be recast as a measured realism in light of this work – for the ingrained patterns of the evangelical types considered collectively show no signs of changing.

1238 For a further analysis, see the chapter titled A Theologically Liberal, Anti-Catholic, and American Principle in Philip Hamburger, Separation of Church and State (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), chapter 8. The two critiques have clear connections, but they are not always found together.
Shea’s hypothetical proposal of a pan-Christian council to discuss the nature of the Church, including both Catholics and evangelicals, is not only highly improbable but misses why such a proposal would inevitably fail. For the Catholics, such conciliar resolutions would still need to be reviewed and ratified by the very structure and hierarchy of which evangelicals are collectively so skeptical. Furthermore, who would represent evangelicalism *en masse* at such a council? Indeed, any constructive proposal such as this must come face-to-face with the perennial concern among evangelicals regarding authority. Although Shea understands the depths of the chasm between evangelicalism and Catholicism, his proposal seems unaware of parts of its contours. As we witnessed in the antebellum era, the expulsion of formalized power – or what we might refer to less ominously as *democratization* – did not necessarily cause the unfettered violence of the Bible Riots, but it unquestionably left evangelicalism without an infrastructure to address the situation. While bishop Kenrick in Philadelphia was able to act with definite ecclesial authority to deter the outbreak of the Bible Riots and then, subsequently, work to quell the violence and address the destruction, there were no such counterparts in the evangelical world. The point is not that Kenrick necessarily embodied a united Catholic voice, but that even in the midst of inevitable dissension among Catholics, there are authority structures and appropriate offices who speak as such for the community *en masse*. What could we say has changed since the antebellum era? Who could speak on behalf of evangelicalism in a post-9/11 world as anti-Catholicism continues unabated? There is, sadly, no better mechanism or more developed infrastructure for evangelicals in the 21st century than the 19th century to address these concerns.

Kimlyn Bender aims to dig deeper into the theological difference at the root of the evangelical and Catholic divide. Using his expertise on Karl Barth, Bender suggests that
theological errors lie on both sides. While the evangelicals have not properly considered the “outward and visible coherence of those who have heard in time,” Catholics have not properly understood that the Church is called to “witness to” and not “embody” Christ, as “an identification of Christ and the Church dangerously confuses the rightful lordship of the first with the service of the latter.” One of the surprising results of this study, however, is that there is a consistent tradition of evangelicals who have used language strikingly similar – often identical – with Roman Catholic ecclesiology. Language of Christological “embodiment” is not the sole property of Catholics. A portion of evangelicals have consistently spoken the same language; and yet these N-R evangelicals remain evangelicals and, furthermore, have a record of anti-Catholicism that is not much rosier than the other types.

Michael Utzinger also agrees with the Noll and Nystrom regarding the “Gordian knot” of ecclesiology, but elaborates by suggesting that the fundamental “institutional ambivalence and decentralized nature” of evangelicals has and will continue to ensure there is no “Alexander to cut through it.” The priority of the internal ecclesiological types over the coherence of them collectively (as evangelicalism) is partly what ensures the knot remains uncuttable. Thus, one of Utzinger’s concerns with Noll and Nystrom’s book is that a certain imprecision surrounds which evangelicals are actually working toward a rapprochement with Catholics. In the end, as Utzinger puts it,

The very institutional ambivalence and decentralized nature of evangelicalism, which makes [moral] co-belligerency viable, will ultimately complicate rapprochement with the institution of the Roman Catholic Church. Although the Roman Catholic Church is a

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1241 J. Michael Utzinger, “Review Symposium: Is the Reformation Over?,” Horizons 34, no. 2 (Fall 2007): 335. The fact that Utzinger has developed this position from his in-depth study of Gilded Age evangelicalism suggests that there may in fact be significant genetic connection between the antebellum and 21st century evangelicals. See J. Michael Utzinger, Yet Saints Their Watch Are Keeping: Fundamentalists, Modernists, and the Development of Evangelical Ecclesiology, 1887-1937 (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2006).
polyglot institution, it nonetheless has a distinct and functioning polity. Even more important, perhaps, it has an institutional ethos.

This, based on the evidence of this dissertation, articulates best the nature of the enduring separation that Noll and Nystrom identify between evangelicals and Catholics.

Though the ecclesiological coherence of evangelicals is found predominantly in their institutional ambivalence and decentralization, there are three shared methodological assumptions that form this apophatic unity in the first place. First is the priority of Scripture. While the N-R type affirms, incorporates, and celebrates much of the tradition of the Church and even insists upon interpreting Scripture from within the tradition, it still affirms the priority of Scripture as the final authority. Conversely, the C-M type wants nothing to do with any form of traditionalism in its affirmation of *sola Scriptura*. The H-C type, as shown, falls somewhere between the other types. Despite their differences, they stand together for Scriptural priority over and against what they view as the Catholic church’s elevation of the authority of tradition to the level of Scripture. Second is structural adaptability. This is manifest in a radical cultural relevancy by the C-M type, or in a celebration of *adiaphora* and the structurally flexible polity of the H-C type. Even the N-R type insists upon institutional development, organically or dialectically so, that grows, changes, matures, and even dies within time. The Church must look different than it once did, they concur. Third is the belief that no single earthly church community will be equated with the *true* Church in heaven. For the H-C type, this means nothing less than the priority of the invisible over any and all visible church community. And though both the C-M type and N-R type place much more emphasis on the visible church, neither is bold enough to make the direct equation between specific churches and the *true* Church exclusively.

The manner in which these three ecclesiological types creatively construe the classic

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1242 Ibid., 337.
visible/invisible distinction is drastically different, but their shared aversion to Catholic claims of being the Church unites them.

In light of the careful inductive analysis of this dissertation, these three broad and modest ingredients collectively form the basic root of what might constructively be called evangelicalism, the shared coherence that unites three very disparate and different ecclesiologies. Because these shared features are theological assumptions – where evangelicals begin their theological reasoning, not their full development – they manifest not as a full-blown visible unity, but in this form of apophatic solidarity. Thus, though many evangelicals have had grand ideals of ecclesial unity, they fail to have the requisite tools to accomplish such ideals. If there is no true Church on this side of the eschaton, then there is no urgency to find and join it, and no church can call for all schismatics to return to her. There are also endless arguments over what the “priority of Scripture” might mean. Finally, if the Church is changing through time, then it becomes even harder to point one’s finger at where it is and what it ought to look like at any given time. In sum, the three shared methodological assumptions of evangelical ecclesiology provide a constructive unity that manifests itself as an apophatic one. What they presume gathers them together most evidently in what they are not. And while their shared theological affirmations allow evangelicals to call themselves evangelical, it actually makes steps toward their ideal of full ecclesial unity more difficult to accomplish in the end.

Three Evangelical Types: Internal Implications

Another result of this study is an affirmation that within the denominational decline among Western Christians, these three types will increasingly be poles of attraction for evangelicals rather than traditional denominational authority centres. This is not to say that the

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1243 For a recent, largely sociological examination, see George Hawley, *Demography, Culture, and the Decline of America’s Christian Denominations* (Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2017).
three types will become three new denominations in evangelicalism, but the informal structures will continue to be centres of gravity for likeminded and informal cooperation. Noll describes the movement of evangelicals as “an ever-diversifying series of local churches, parachurch agencies, national and international ministries, and interlocking networks of publications, preachers, and personal contacts.”¹²⁴⁴ Within such a fluid infrastructure, the decline of denominationalism will likely not be as catastrophic to evangelical churches as to their Protestant mainline counterparts (or perhaps even Roman Catholics or Orthodox churches); nevertheless, the loss of formal denominational structures will precipitate and encourage closer affinity with churches that look, feel, and act the same. Thus, the ecclesiological types will be the conscious or subconscious rallying cry around which new “parachurch agencies, national and international ministries, and interlocking networks of publications, preachers, and personal contacts” find their footings. In many instances, this is what evangelicals have been doing since The Great Awakening with Whitfield and the Tennents in America being the example par excellence.¹²⁴⁵ Once again, nothing here is sui generis in the 21st century, but the pace will undoubtedly quicken with the rapid disintegration of denominational affiliation. Things like the networks of missional Church initiatives (Forge, Verge, Ecclesia, etc.) or the Together For the Gospel (T4G) conferences, or even the Ancient-Future Faith Network are all examples of this happening in real time among the three evangelical ecclesiological types respectively.¹²⁴⁶

In many ways these organizations and ad hoc cooperative efforts are the very fruit of the new things that evangelicals are advocating for in the post-Christian context of the 21st century.

¹²⁴⁶ This is not to say that denominations will be abandoned altogether either. In fact, the FV is an example of how informal ecclesiological networks can actually aid in denominational proliferation, as the CREC is partly a product of the movement.
And in this way, perhaps we could agree that something new is afoot, though it is more a reconfiguration of the façade than a reconstruction of the building itself. This is not to dismiss the shift that is underway as superficial or unimportant. Rather what we are witnessing is the full flowering of the ecclesial types that coalesced in the antebellum era, unrestricted by the fetters of traditional denominational loyalties. This is increasingly apparent as evidenced by the lack of denominational loyalty among most evangelicals and the rise of the “Community Church,” which has seen “nondenominational” evangelicals increase over 400% since the 1970s.¹²⁴⁷

Without the inherited denominational infrastructures that were never materially attached to the ecclesial types themselves (as repeatedly noted above), the three types are less inclined to hold each other in check. These denominations once worked to hold together – no matter how lightly – the three types within specific political bodies which forced them at the very least to acknowledge each other. For example, among antebellum Presbyterians there existed all three types of evangelical ecclesiologies. Being Presbyterian did not limit an adherent to one particular type, and though the seeds of this denominational demise were planted in this era with the open questioning of traditional institutional authorities, the ties that bound the denominations were still relatively strong despite the eager transdenominational cooperation. Accordingly, antebellum Presbyterians that fit into the C-M, H-C, and N-R types were held in dialogue by the denominational infrastructures of the General Assembly, Presbyteries, Seminaries, and other denominational agencies and institutions. The denominations worked as a tool of restraint by continuing to force advocates of the different types to face each other – sometimes literally in the venue of assemblies and sessions. Yet the full flowering of the antebellum democratization

impulse and the rejection of inherited and traditional ecclesio-political structures in contemporary evangelicalism has left these three types less constrained by one another, allowing them to freely pursue their own ecclesiological proclivities. The result is a threefold movement that the evangelical world is witnessing right now: first, the shedding of the vestigial denominational loyalties that were active and engaged through the 19th and 20th century; second, the reorganization of evangelical networks and agencies around the types themselves, like those noted above; and third, an increasing distance in communication and cooperation among them.

What is lost in this full flowering? As the types are left without infrastructures that compel them to face each other or even without mechanisms that can compel them to engage one another (no conciliar tradition, teaching office, magisterium, or even denominational context in many cases), they are free to drift further apart, unaccountable to any cross-type means. Just so, their particular (sometime even peculiar) understanding of the gospel is promoted as the gospel, which tends to exacerbate the already strained relational connections that remain between the types. If volleys are lobbed across the typological divides, they usually lack the nuance and irenicism that is often required (though admittedly often absent) in dialogue between differing parties that must find ways to exist within shared institutional infrastructures like denominations or communions.

The ecclesiological result can be described with contrasting images. On the one hand, it could be described as the emergence of super-types that no longer pull from evangelicals across the denominational spectrum, but begin to take on entity-like characteristics. On the other hand, it can be legitimately expressed as the ghettoization of evangelicalism. Splintered into ecclesial types with hardening borders and trajectories that chart diverging paths, the decreasing cross-type communication leads to ghetto-types that exist unto themselves. Gone are the “gilded
“cages” of staunch denominational loyalty among evangelicals, but unsurprisingly, the new-found freedom of nondenominationalism has not manifested itself in any higher degree of unity. Surely this is a lesson that Campbell’s splintering heirs could have taught evangelicals from the 19th century, had they been willing to listen and learn. Going it alone, shirking the unbiblical authorities of humankind, laying the axe to the root of inherited authority, and seeking unity by pressing the reset button only tends to replay the scene’s sequence interminably. Even the counter-movement of the N-R type that obsesses over the corporate nature of the Church, lambasting those individualistic evangelical brethren and proclaiming the need to retrieve the historical traditions of the Church, is not immune to this privatization of faith. For who is it, after all, that decides which traditions and whose communities are a part of this true Church? For Doug Wilson and other members of the FV, the irony that this anti-individualistic retrieval has led to a new evangelical denomination in the CREC is largely lost on them.

Finally, the deliberately minimalist ecclesiology of the H-C type may be the most affected by this ghettoization amid the flowering of the so-called post-Christian context. When the raison d’être of the Church is understood to be the personal growth of an individual’s faith, the loss of secondary contrasting voices suggesting it might be more than that could lead to an even greater exodus from the pews of these churches. As former members choose to forgo the superfluity of “Sunday worship,” they might (or might not!) occasionally meet with fellow Christ-followers at the local coffee shop to do church and keep their spiritual lives strong.

It is difficult to imagine at this point what could reverse this centrifugal spiral, drawing these types back together, not to press them into one type, but to at least place them in deliberate dialogue if not theological tension. Left to their own devices, the types cannot help but

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proliferate the further privatization of faith, sometimes marketed as a healthy pluralism that gives options for individuals, a Baskin and Robbins for the evangelical palette. On one hand evangelicals are the consummate pluralists – celebrating the disestablishment of state churches and the need for personal preference in matters of religious adherence – yet on the other hand they are also detractors of those who advocate some form of institutional externality that impinges or imposes upon absolute individual volitional freedom. They are pluralists when the alternatives look at least remotely like them, but anti-pluralists when there are things that look too institutionally hegemonic on offer.\footnote{1249 This was a significant impetus for the mixture of nativism and religious violence in the Bible Riots of the antebellum era and has remained so in the reaction to Roman Catholicism in the post-9/11 context. Catholics are the preeminent example of this institutional boogeyman, a most menacing ecclesiological enemy. This is the intersection of the threeness and the oneness of evangelical ecclesiology (no Trinitarian pun intended). While the three types move further afield without an infrastructure that brings them into a shared arena, they continue to present a united front against the structural institutional hierarchy, real or imagined, of the Catholic Church. This tension, created as the ghettoization of the types increases and the apophatic solidarity remains, shapes the paradoxical character of evangelicalism – at once a unifying dynamism that also retards the full realization of ecclesial unity, and even acts as a potential accelerant to the incendiary nature of religious conflict and violence.} David Sehat’s book on the American myth of religious disestablishment concludes with a snapshot of the two parties in the dispute, which he labels for simplicity “Conservatives” and “Liberals.” The conservatives, he claims, “believe that the United States exists as a free society because of its divinely ordained moral foundation. The institutions of civil society, especially the church, the family, and the many voluntary organizations with religious origins, buttress the state’s efforts to enforce the moral norms that have made the United States great.” On the other side, the liberals, he notes, “claim that individuals ought to be trusted to make moral choices. In a world of divergent moral ideals, only by allowing individuals to make those choices can the United States avoid coercive authoritarianism.” It is clear that evangelicals belong to both camps and this is a major part of their internal confliction. David Sehat, \textit{The Myth of American Religious Freedom} (New York: OUP, 2011), 283.
### Appendix A: Ministerial Offices Comparison of Campbell and Hodge

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- Campbell’s relationship between “Pastor” and “Elder or Bishop” was not always clear.
- Campbell felt each congregation needed at least one Bishop or Elder, but preferred multiple for larger congregations.
- Hodge did use the term “Presbyter” for the Ruling Elders as well; however, because of the sharp dispute between Thomas Smyth and the Southern Presbyterians (largely over Samuel Miller’s ecclesiological legacy), he shied away from emphasizing this point.
- Hodge sided with Smyth (and against Miller, though he never outright admitted this) by insisting the Ruling Elders were lay and not ordained.
- Both Hodge and Campbell believed the role of Apostle carried every task listed, but was not a perpetual office of the Church and passed with the deaths of the original Apostles.

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1250 The chart is slightly misleading: Hodge sees the primary ministerial role in a congregation as the Presbyter, who received “ruling” help from the Ruling Elders. (Whether the Ruling Elder was a Presbyter or not was a significant debate between 1840 and 1860, in which Hodge tried to use the term in a technical sense for the Ministerial Office and a generic sense for the Ruling Elder.) For Campbell, on the other hand, the primary role in a congregation is the Bishop/Elder, who received “preaching/teaching” help from the Evangelists. Hodge’s fullest explanation comes in his section “Warrant and Theory of Ruling Eldership”: Hodge, The Church and Its Polity, 262ff. The most significant differences arise because Campbell’s “evangelists” can be itinerant and his “elders or bishops” are ordained as a teaching office as well as congregational oversight. There are numerous other nuances that could be explored between these conceptions of ministerial office; however, they are beyond the scope of this work.
Appendix B: Conceptual Diagram of Non-Ordinal Types
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