

**War, Popes, and Revelation: Three Cases Studies of Centralized Authority as a Backdrop
for G. I. Butler’s Leadership Philosophy of 1873**

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Centralization of Authority

Jon Butler has argued that nineteenth century America is unique because of “the shift of religious authority away from the state toward the ‘voluntary’ institutional bodies.”¹ Since democracy changed the manner in which religious authority in America was implemented, what emerged in the early 1800s can be referred to as “republican hierarchicalism.”² As Butler explains, “Denominations were republican not only in their love of virtue . . . but in their conviction that not quite all were equal in matters of governance. In most denominations, authority continued to flow down from the top, not rise up from the bottom.”³

Adventism was not immune from this trend. During the mid-1870s, one person was made the highest authority in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Adventists adopted this position in November 1873 in the midst of chaos and disunity. Driven by a strong desire for harmony, the leaders of the denomination felt that the centralization of authority (at the expense of the right of private judgment) was the wisest route to take in order to achieve the church’s mission and goals.

The Adventist decision to centralize authority in the nineteenth century was not unique. In addition to other denominations, several other movements also began to centralize in the 1860s and 1870s. The following three case studies illustrate a general tendency that is observable

¹ Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith*, 268.

² *Ibid.*, 272.

³ *Ibid.*

in human nature generally, and in the nineteenth-century world specifically. Simply put: humans tend to be drawn toward a centralized authority when unity and peace are threatened. First, the United States government in the 1860-70s provides valuable insight for the Adventist leadership controversy. Not only does it highlight some of the immediate context for Adventism, but G. I. Butler also used the Civil War and federal government as illustrations to support the concept of centralized authority that Adventists adopted in November 1873. Secondly, the First Vatican Council underlines a peculiar analogy between Adventism and the Roman Catholic Church. Interestingly enough, both denominations made the decision to centralize authority in one man during the 1870s. However, while one church continued with its tradition, the other revoked its prior position. The final case study briefly evaluates Charles Hodge and his view of revelation and inspiration. Hodge centralized authority within Scripture to a hazardous degree through his understanding of revelation and inspiration. This discussion is valuable since several Adventists wrestled with understanding how Ellen White received revelations. Therefore, while these three case studies are not directly related to the Adventist leadership controversy that transpired between 1867-1877, this background information will certainly help reconstruct the mentality and rationale of the Seventh-day Adventist pioneers during this period.

Centralized Authority: The United States Government

Death pervaded America during the Civil War. At the beginning, in June 1862, one soldier commented to his wife, “It is no dread any more for me to see a dead man laying around anywhere because we are in a perfect graveyard all the time.”⁴ At its conclusion, citizens were numbed by the staggering losses on both sides. According to Drew Gilpin Faust, “The number of

⁴ John E. Rust to Judith Rust, June 22, 1862, Rust-Carter Southwest Seventh-day Adventist Archives, John Ethan Rust Family Collection (RC1-1), Folder 11, AHC.

soldiers who died between 1861 and 1865, an estimated 620,000, is approximately equal to the total American fatalities in the Revolution, the War of 1812, the Mexican War, the Spanish-American War, World War I, World War II, and the Korean War combined.”⁵ In addition to the deaths of soldiers, James McPherson estimates that there were approximately fifty thousand civilian lives lost as a result of the war.⁶ In truth, nearly every family in America at this time knew first hand the sting of death and as a result sought for restored harmony in the *United States of America*.

Throughout the Civil War, union progressively became the primary value of the American nation. Death and disorder made Americans willing to sacrifice many of their freedoms in order to preserve life and reestablish peace and unity. According to Faust, “Death created the modern American union—not just by ensuring national survival, but by shaping enduring national structures and commitments.”⁷ As a result, the nation began to centralize its authority in the federal government with giant strides. Eric Foner explains, “Most functions of government were handled at the state and local level [before the Civil War]; one could live out one’s life without ever encountering an official representative of national authority.”⁸ During the

⁵ Drew Gilpin Faust, *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* (New York: Vintage Books, 2009), xi. In addition to the death toll, Bruce Kuklick estimates that 375,000 soldiers were wounded, leaving countless numbers with lost limbs and psychological trauma. Bruce Kuklick, *A Political History of the USA: One Nation Under God* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 144. Mississippi alone, in 1865, spent 20 percent of its revenue on artificial limbs for its veterans. Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America’s Unfinished Revolution 1863-1877* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), 125.

⁶ James McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 619, n. 53.

⁷ Faust, *This Republic of Suffering*, xiv.

⁸ Foner, *Reconstruction*, 23. A salient example of limited authority in the United States government before the Civil War can be seen in Michigan’s journey toward statehood. On June 15, 1836, the United States government adopted an act that defined the Ohio-Michigan border and declared Michigan to be one of the United States of America. However, on September 27, 1836, some representatives of Michigan met at Ann Arbor and determined by vote “not to become a State under the

antebellum years, there was also a lack of patriotism in a *united* nation. Harry S. Stout has noted, “In the early Republic, the American flag, the clearest and most literal emblem of patriotism, was barely visible. Flags were limited largely to merchant and naval ships. None flew from homes or churches.”⁹ In the midst of war a “newly centralized nation-state” began to develop¹⁰ and the American flag rose in prominence as a *national* symbol.¹¹

Many factors contributed to this shift of authority. Since the signing of the Declaration of Independence in 1776, the American states were declared a *union*. However, between 1820 and 1861 tensions between the North and South continued to escalate due to conflicting ideas over banking, reforms, tariffs, trade, and especially slavery.¹²

When Abraham Lincoln gave his second inaugural address on March 4, 1865, he gave three primary reasons for the cause of the war. For Lincoln, the first and primary reason of war was the preservation of the union.¹³ The other two reasons that Lincoln gave—the issue of slavery and the restriction of new slave states being added to the Union—were primarily significant because Southerners opposed to these ideas threatened to break the unity of the nation upon such grounds. In his view, slavery was the cause of secession and secession was the cause

provisions of the law of the last session of Congress.” “Michigan as It Was!,” *Schenectady (NY) Cabinet*, October 12, 1836, p. 2, col. 3-4, <http://www.genealogybank.com>, hereafter cited as Genealogy Bank. Therefore, the independent state of Michigan initially overruled the authority of the United States government and did not accept its statehood until the following year.

⁹ Harry S. Stout, *Upon the Altar of the Nation: A Moral History of the Civil War* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006), 28.

¹⁰ Faust, *This Republic of Suffering*, xiii.

¹¹ Stout, *Upon the Altar of the Nation*, 26-34.

¹² Kuklick, *A Political History of the USA*, 111-131; Allen C. Guelzo, *Fateful Lightning: A New History of the Civil War & Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 54. Most scholars recognize that tensions between the North and South began to escalate at a rapid pace ever since the Missouri Compromise (1820).

¹³ *Ibid.*, 4.

of the war.¹⁴ Therefore, Foner correctly claims, “restoration of the Union, not emancipation, was the cause that generated the widest support of the war effort.”¹⁵

Due to a growing desire for peace and unity throughout the war, the national government was allowed new authoritative actions. One significant change was conscription,¹⁶ which Foner refers to as the “quintessential example of the aggrandizement of federal power.”¹⁷ The citizens in America were shocked to learn that federal authorities could assert so much control. Between July 13-16, 1863, angry mobs in New York City pillaged homes, burned down buildings (including the Colored Orphan Asylum), lynched African Americans, attacked telegraph lines, and even tried to demolish the *New York Tribune* headquarters.¹⁸ In fact, the New York City Draft Riot is still considered the “largest civil insurrection in American history.”¹⁹ Clearly Americans were not prepared to accept all of the consequences of the governments’ new authoritative actions.

The Emancipation Proclamation highlights another significant shift in governmental authority. This decree changed both the character of the war and created significant problems for Reconstruction. For Southerners, it primarily meant that even when peace was restored, the

¹⁴ C.f. Stout, *Upon the Altar of the Nation*, 41.

¹⁵ Foner, *Reconstruction*, 4. Ellen G. White, also recognized that the Civil War was primarily fought to preserve unity within the nation. White related in a vision that she had been given on January 4, 1862, stating, “I was shown if the object of this war had been to exterminate slavery, then, if desired, England would have helped the North. But England fully understands the existing feelings in the government, and that the war is not to do away slavery, but merely to preserve the Union; and it is not for her interest to have it preserved.” White, 1T, 258; c.f. Ellen G. White, *Testimony for the Church*, No. 7 (Battle Creek, MI: Steam Press, 1862), 9-10.

¹⁶ The first draft in America was actually enacted by the Confederate States of America in early 1862. Foner, *Reconstruction*, 15.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 32.

¹⁸ Guelzo, *Fateful Lightning*, 461.

¹⁹ Foner, *Reconstruction*, 32.

former political status of the South could never be renewed without the recognition and acceptance of “Northern” law.²⁰ Furthermore, emancipation of former slaves placed *all* Americans equally²¹ under one authority—the United States government, which eclipsed local law if necessary.

Centralized banking is also an example of escalating national power during the Civil War. Due to the high costs of war, the North decided to resurrect the Federal Banking System in 1863.²² As a result, thousands of greenback notes were printed, which depreciated almost as fast as they were produced. In order to prohibit other banks from printing rival currency, the federal government placed a ten percent tax on each dollar printed, which worked effectively. Needless to say, this “solution” caused numerous other problems and by the end of the war the United States carried a national debt of over \$2 billion.²³ During Reconstruction, the federal government attempted to solve this dilemma by defining the value of currency by gold. As Brian Balogh has remarked, “The United States government maintained the gold standard against all odds,”²⁴ even though it was vehemently resisted by some farmers and small businessmen. From their perspective, “a rigid gold standard exposed agriculture and small business to competition from afar, overruling long-standing state prerogatives.”²⁵

²⁰ Ibid., 35.

²¹ By this statement I am not implying that African Americans were treated with fairness and equality immediately following the war.

²² The country’s first central bank, the Bank of the United States, was quashed by Andrew Jackson in 1836 and labeled the “Monster Bank.” Joyce Appleby, *The Relentless Revolution: A History of Capitalism* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2010), 189.

²³ Foner, *Reconstruction*, 22.

²⁴ Brian Balogh, *A Government Out of Sight: The Mystery of National Authority in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 345.

²⁵ Ibid.

The “Civil War proved to be a catalyst for national consolidation”²⁶ and during the Reconstruction period, authority and power continued to centralize. Bandits, outlaws, terrorist organizations, and American Indians continued to threaten daily life and peace. In the heart of the former Confederate States of America, men like Lucien Beard, the notorious king of horse thieves, threatened the livelihood of farmers and local citizens.²⁷ Gunslingers like Billy the Kid and Wild Bill Longley plagued the Wild West, while desperadoes like Jesse James and his gang threatened local banks, stagecoaches, and trains throughout the central states. In December 1865, six young men organized the Ku Klux Klan in Pulaski, TN.²⁸ Within a few years, these terrorists were a force to be reckoned with, causing death and injury to scores of black men, women, and children. In addition to these challenges, settlers on the frontier and those working on the railroads were in frequent danger from Indian attacks. Massacres like that of General Custer and his army at the Battle of the Little Bighorn continued to bring back painful memories of death to the American heart.

In order to provide proper resting ground for the mass of dead bodies caused by the Civil War and Indian battles, national cemeteries began appearing in 1867, which were maintained by

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 277.

²⁷ The *Petersburg Daily Index* estimated that Lucien Beard had stolen about 500 horses in Virginia alone between late 1867 and early 1871. “Prince Edward: Arrest of Beard, the Horse Thief—Excitement—‘Fancy’ Tobacco—Removal of the Courthouse—Senatorial Reminiscence,” *Petersburg (VA) Daily Index*, February 25, 1871, p. 2, col. 3, <http://www.newspaperarchive.com>, hereafter cited as Newspaper Archive. At this time, horse stealing was considered such a vile offense to the people, that some states, like Virginia and Georgia, considered horse thievery a capital offense and hanging a justifiable punishment. “Horse Stealing,” *Staunton (VA) Spectator*, March 20, 1866, p. 2, col. 4, *Chronicling America*; “Newspaper News,” *Norfolk (VA) Post*, March 2, 1866, p. 2, col. 5, *Chronicling America*.

²⁸ David M. Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism: The First Century of the Ku Klux Klan 1865-1965* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1965), 8.

federal funding.²⁹ These sites introduced Americans to the doleful word, “Unknown,” which was inscribed on hundreds of tombstones. The federal pension system was also introduced, which quickly became the greatest expense within the United States budget.³⁰ Growing expenses such as these were usually accommodated for by increased federal taxes.

The growing strength of the national government was also observable in relation to business and economy. While many advocated nonintervention after the Civil War, Brian Balogh has convincingly demonstrated that there were “judicial exceptions” during the peak of laissez-faire mentality in America that denote national authoritative action. According to Balogh, “The federal judiciary . . . carved out a new role in the Gilded Age [of laissez-faire] – determining the boundaries between public and private activities and ensuring that the two did not intermingle.”³¹ For example, America’s first monopolies, like the Western Union, quickly developed after the war.³² Monopolizing power eventually became such a dominant force that federal authorities had to create new laws that intruded upon the freedom of commerce.³³

Railroad tycoons also began to rise up at this time with the national government playing a major roll in their success. In fact, over 100 million acres of land was given to railway companies between 1862 and 1872.³⁴ In addition to these land grants, mining companies were

²⁹ Faust, *This Republic of Suffering*, xiv. Well over 100 national cemeteries exist within America today.

³⁰ Appleby, *The Relentless Revolution*, 190.

³¹ Balogh, *A Government Out of Sight*, 315.

³² Paul A. Baran and Paul M. Sweezy, *Monopoly Capital: An Essay on the American Economic and Social Order* (New York and London: Modern Reader Paperbacks, 1966), 218; c.f. Foner, *Reconstruction*, 20.

³³ The first antitrust act in America was the Sherman Anti-Trust Act, issued on July 2, 1890.

³⁴ C.f. *ibid.*, 467.

given millions of acres of land as a result of the National Mineral Act of 1866.³⁵ While much of the property given to these industries was “public,” eminent domain became more of a problem as private landowners were forced to sell their property.³⁶ In 1876, *Kohl vs. United States*, the first case regarding eminent domain to be reviewed at the Supreme Court, demonstrated that the Constitution does not explicitly allow the federal government the power of eminent domain. Rather, the Constitution allows the federal government to assume this power due to its sovereignty.³⁷

It is not possible to mention here every aspect that contributed to the centralization of authority in the one nation-state. Regardless, this summary demonstrates that the Civil War and Reconstruction brought about significant changes in America’s history. Death was a primary cause and convicted many people that a national authority was more worthy of trust than a local one. The death of Abraham Lincoln was particularly impactful. Though they had already suffered great losses during the war, one couple was willing to give up even more after the death of their adored President. After describing her difficulties, Judith Rust commented to her husband, “But when I think of our beloved President that has carried us through this fearful

³⁵ C.f. *ibid.*

³⁶ One such person was Elizabeth Glasgow Johns, who owned numerous acres of land at the foot of Sallings Mountain in present-day Glasgow, VA. Mrs. Johns fought for about a year in court to keep her land between 1881 and 1882. However, the Shenandoah Valley Railroad Company eventually prevailed and Mrs. Johns was given \$1,800 for her “condemned” land. *Rockbridge County, Virginia, Shenandoah Valley Railroad Company v. Elizabeth G. Johns, 1881-1882, Deed Book TT 1882-1883, pp. 308-310; 332-334; 369-371, Circuit Clerk’s Office, Rockbridge.*

³⁷ William A. Curran, “Preventing Real Takings for Imaginary Purposes: A Post-*Kelo* Public Use Proposal,” *New York University Law Review* 84.6 (2009): 1659-1660.

struggle, I feel as if we should give up all to sustain that government that is cemented by a patriot's blood.”³⁸

While many Americans patriotically defended their nation with increasing vigor, many others aggressively tried to keep America from centralizing. Senators James B. Beck of Kentucky and William W. Eaton of Connecticut utilized the New Haven *Register* for their “gospel” of state-sovereignty.³⁹ Essentially these men claimed that a “nation” was radically different from the country envisioned by the American forefathers, who presented centralized authority as a significant threat to personal freedom in the Bill of Rights.⁴⁰ Nevertheless, the changes made during and after the war are understandable and perhaps even justifiable. As a result, the centralization of authority was not necessarily shunned at this time, and many counted it a blessing in many ways.⁴¹

Centralized Authority: The First Vatican Council

Since the establishment of the Papacy,⁴² its power and authority continued to escalate. In particular, G. Mollat has noted that from the reign of Gregory VII (1073-1085) “the government

³⁸ Judith Rust to John E. Rust, May 4, 1865, Rust-Carter Southwest Seventh-day Adventist Archives, John Ethan Rust Family Collection (RC1-2), Folder 1, AHC.

³⁹ “Is this a Nation?,” *Allegan (MI) Journal*, October 2, 1875, p. 1, col. 4-5, Allegan District Library, Allegan, MI.

⁴⁰ C.f. Foner, *Reconstruction*, 24.

⁴¹ C.f. “Is this a Nation?,” *Allegan (MI) Journal*, October 2, 1875, p. 1, col. 4-5.

⁴² Scholars tend to disagree to a large extent as to when the Papacy was first established. C.f. Ivor J. Davidson, *A Public Faith: From Constantine to the Medieval World, A.D. 312-600*, The Baker History of the Church 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005), 119; C. Mervyn Maxwell, *God Cares, Vol. 1: The Message of Daniel For You and Your Family* (Nampa, ID and Oshawa, ON: Pacific Press, 1981), 145-147; William Ernest Beet, *The Rise of the Papacy: A.D. 385-461* (London: Charles H. Kelley, 1910), 161. However, it is certainly clear that by the time of Gregory the Great (590-604), the Papacy was firmly established.

of the Church had become increasingly centralised under the personal control of the Roman pontiff.”⁴³ This power reached its zenith with Pope Innocent III (1198-1216). Not only was Innocent III the first pope to declare himself the Vicar of Christ, but he also became one of the most dominant leaders the world has ever known by making numerous kings subject to his rule.⁴⁴

However, on July 18, 1870,⁴⁵ the Papacy asserted its greatest claim of authority by declaring the pope infallible when speaking *ex cathedra*.⁴⁶ According to Jesuit scholar, Richard F. Costigan, the majority of those present at the First Vatican Council (1869-1870) “were determined to assert a strictly monarchical version of papal supremacy and to exclude any phrase that might suggest any kind of qualification or limitation of that sovereign ruling and teaching power.”⁴⁷

Thomas Bokenkotter offers six reasons as to why the Roman Catholic Church elevated the authority of the pope at Vatican I.⁴⁸ All six reasons are directly related to the French Revolution. Two of these insights are particularly worthy of note since they are directly related to the Bishop of Rome. First of all, many Catholics believed that strengthening the papacy was the best way to protect against the challenges, both political and doctrinal, brought forth during the revolution of France.

⁴³ G. Mollat, *The Popes at Avignon: 1305-1378* (Edinburgh, UK: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1963), 335.

⁴⁴ Thomas Bokenkotter, *A Concise History of the Catholic Church*, rev. ed. (New York: Image Books, 2005), 127-133.

⁴⁵ Richard F. Costigan, *The Consensus of the Church and Papal Infallibility: A Study in the Background of Vatican I* (Washington D. C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2005), 1.

⁴⁶ *Ex cathedra* literally means, “from the chair.”

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁴⁸ Bokenkotter, *A Concise History of the Catholic Church*, 317-318.

The French Revolution (1789-1799) was a product of Enlightenment ideals and dealt the Roman Catholic Church a deadly wound. In the spring of 1791, Pope Pius VI (1775-1799) tried to assert his authority over the French government by condemning a document known as the Civil Constitution of the Clergy, which placed the Catholic Church in France beneath the secular government.⁴⁹ As a result, tensions between Rome and France grew increasingly hostile. A few years later, on February 15, 1798, French General Louis Berthier invaded Rome, denounced the pope as head of the state, and took Pius VI away as his prisoner.⁵⁰ Pius VI was locked away for several months and eventually died in captivity. According to Catholic scholar J. N. D. Kelly, “At his death, after one of the longest pontificates in history, many assumed that the destruction of the holy see had at last been accomplished.”⁵¹

About two years after Pius VI’s removal from Rome, Luigi Barnabà Chiaramonte was elected the successor of Saint Peter and became Pope Pius VII (1800-1823). During his reign, Pius VII continued to struggle with France and particularly its commander, Napoleon Bonaparte. In 1804, Pius VII was directed to Paris in order to crown Napoleon as Emperor. However, just as the pope was about to perform this deed, Napoleon wrenched the crown from the pope’s hands and placed it on his own head, symbolizing his own authority over the Roman pontiff.⁵²

The relationship between the pope and Napoleon did not improve over time and in 1808 a pope was again taken captive. Interestingly enough, Kelly points out that, “The prestige of Pius

⁴⁹ J. N. D. Kelly, *The Oxford Dictionary of Popes* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 302.

⁵⁰ Kelly, *The Oxford Dictionary of Popes*, 302; c.f. Justo L. González, *The Story of Christianity, Vol. II: The Reformation to the Present Day*, rev. ed. (New York: Harper One, 2010), 399-400.

⁵¹ Kelly, *The Oxford Dictionary of Popes*, 302.

⁵² González, *The Story of Christianity*, 400.

personally, as of the papacy, was enhanced by his harsh captivity.”⁵³ Due to widespread sympathy, Bokenkotter claims that Pius VII’s incumbency was the second contributing factor to the declaration of papal infallibility at Vatican I.⁵⁴

In the nineteenth century Roman Catholic mindset, the most condemnatory problem that needed to be crushed was Gallicanism. This term is derived from the word “Gaul” (roughly equivalent with modern-day France) because the movement became most powerful in France.⁵⁵ Although numerous strands of Gallicanism existed, Victor Martin provides an apt description of this fluid group of revolutionaries. Martin states, “If there is need to define it, you could say that it consists in the accord of the king and the clergy to govern the Church of France by controlling and restraining the interference of the Holy See, and believed that they were right in resisting papal demands that they saw as going beyond the legitimate traditional role of the Roman Pontiff.”⁵⁶ This strand of thinking naturally flourished under rulers like Napoleon Bonaparte.

In 1870, the French Revolution was still fresh in Rome’s memory. Although Gallicanism had essentially died out by this time,⁵⁷ the fear of its reprise or renewal allowed Pope Pius IX (1846-1878) and his Curia to secure the adoption of *Pastor Aeternus* and its controversial

⁵³ Kelly, *The Oxford Dictionary of Popes*, 303.

⁵⁴ Bokenkotter, *A Concise History of the Catholic Church*, 317. The other four contributing factors noted by Bokenkotter are as follows: “Third, the clergy, who had been stripped by the Revolution of their property and privileges, found Rome their only defense against the whims of the lay state... Fourth, many priests who suffered persecution for their obedience to Rome came out of their experience strengthened in their loyalty. Fifth, the Concordat of 1801, requiring that the whole French episcopate tender their resignation to the Pope, struck a heavy blow at Gallicanism by providing an unprecedented and awesome demonstration of the Pope’s power over the bishops. Sixth, the same concordat, by giving the bishops almost unlimited authority over their priests, drove the latter into the arms of the Pope as their only safeguard against episcopal arbitrariness.” *Ibid.*, 317-318.

⁵⁵ González, *The Story of Christianity*, 212.

⁵⁶ Victor Martin, *Les Origines du Gallicanisme* (Paris: Bloud et Gay, 1939), quoted in Costigan, *The Consensus of the Church and Papal Infallibility*, 7.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 5.

statement on infallibility. Interestingly enough, while Vatican I fully centralized authority within the pope, *Pastor Aeternus* was actually adopted at a paradoxical time in history. The wound that came in 1798 with Pius VI's ejection from Rome was still festering and on September 20, 1870, a mere two months after infallibility had been declared, the Papal States were forcefully removed from the pope. Pius IX lashed out by declaring himself a prisoner of the king and succeeding popes maintained the same attitude until Pope Pius XI (1922-1939), in 1929, finally admitted that the property was taken.⁵⁸ Today the Roman Catholic headquarters are still limited to the mere 110 acres that comprise Vatican City.

While the Catholic Church did lose its “temporal” power in the nineteenth century, it did not lack for pious leadership. Catholic leaders, faced with continual crisis, did all they could to protect themselves. As a result, “spiritual” authority was centralized in one man—the infallible Vicar of Christ. By this action, the Church of Rome again felt secure in this world of sin.

Centralized Authority: Charles Hodge and Inerrancy

Historian W. Andrew Hoffecker elucidates, “The Presbyterian church in the nineteenth century exercised an influence on American life out of proportion to its numerical strength.”⁵⁹ The primary reason for Presbyterian success was Princeton University and its illustrious Divines. Theologians such as Francis Turretin (1623-1687), Archibald Alexander (1772-1851), Charles Hodge (1797-1878), Archibald Alexander Hodge (1823-1886), and Benjamin Breckinridge

⁵⁸ González, *The Story of Christianity*, 405.

⁵⁹ W. Andrew Hoffecker, *Charles Hodge: The Pride of Princeton*, American Reformed Biographies (Phillipsburg, NJ: 2011), 25.

Warfield (1851-1921) were the veritable force that laid the foundations for fundamentalism, which matured in the early twentieth century.⁶⁰

Out of all of these theologians, Charles Hodge was by far the most influential.⁶¹ Hodge was one of the first full-time professors of theology in the United States⁶² and taught for fifty-six years. During his tenure at Princeton, Hodge educated over three thousand students at the Seminary, more than any other American theologian in history.⁶³ In addition to teaching, Hodge was an adept scholar and edited upwards of one hundred and twenty issues of the *Princeton Review* and personally contributed over two hundred articles. Furthermore, Hodge authored a handful of commentaries and wrote numerous other books such as *The Way of Life* (1841) and his three-volume *Systematic Theology* (1871-1873).⁶⁴ As a result, it is no surprise that Hodge was “widely acknowledged as the Pope of Presbyterianism and the ‘Nestor’ of American theology” by his contemporaries.⁶⁵

Charles Hodge was born into a strict Presbyterian family on December 28, 1797, in Philadelphia, PA.⁶⁶ Next to the Bible, Hodge held the Westminster Confession and Shorter Catechism in very high regard. While a student at the Princeton Seminary, Hodge was instructed by Archibald Alexander and used Francis Turretin’s *Institutio Theologiae Elencticae* as his

⁶⁰ Roger E. Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology: Twenty Centuries of Tradition & Reform* (Downer’s Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1999), 557.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² David Torbett, *Theology and Slavery: Charles Hodge and Horace Bushnell* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2006), 60.

⁶³ Paul C. Gutjahr, *Charles Hodge: Guardian of American Orthodoxy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 3-4.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 4.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 3.

⁶⁶ Hoffecker, *Charles Hodge*, 27.

primary textbook.⁶⁷ Hodge later spent time in Germany where he listened to the modern ideas of Schleiermacher and Hegel.⁶⁸ As a result, Hodge developed an early resistance to new “liberal” ideas that begin to arise in the 1800s and began to safeguard Protestant Orthodoxy by centralizing authority within one book—the Holy Bible.

Throughout his life, Hodge dealt with numerous theories that threatened the reliability of the Scripture. First of all, Hodge had to endure the rise of Biblical criticism. The JDEP Theory (also known as the Documentary Hypothesis), which challenged the traditional authorship and construction of Biblical books was fully in place before Charles Hodge began to publish his *Systematic Theology* in 1871.⁶⁹ Schleiermacher also threatened the authority of Scripture by introducing a concept of inspiration based upon feeling. As a result, Schleiermacher taught that God did not inspire the Bible and that it was merely the work of human writers.⁷⁰ The Princeton Seminary, and Charles Hodge in particular, reacted very strongly to liberal ideas set in motion by Biblical criticism and Schleiermacher.⁷¹ For Hodge, “all the books of Scripture are equally inspired. All alike are infallible in what they teach . . . Inspiration extends to all the contents of these several books [within the Bible]. It is not confined to moral and religious truths, but extends to the statement of facts, whether scientific, historical, or geographical.”⁷²

⁶⁷ Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology*, 558; c.f. Hoffecker, *Charles Hodge*, 47-48.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 89-92.

⁶⁹ Gregg R. Allison, *Historical Theology: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 114, n. 70.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 70.

⁷¹ Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction*, 5th ed. (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 136.

⁷² Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 3 vols. (New York: C. Scribner, Armstrong, and Company, 1871-1873), 1:163.

Hodge advocated what is known as plenary inspiration and claimed it was “taught by the lips of Christ himself.”⁷³ According to Hodge, God allowed the writer freedom throughout the process of inspiration in regard to language and style.⁷⁴ However, despite these freedoms, the writer was not allowed to choose the actual words they wrote down. Hodge continually claimed, “[T]hey spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, and their words were *his words*.”⁷⁵ Furthermore, Hodge stated, “This, moreover, is the very idea of inspiration as understood by the ancient world. The words of the oracle were assumed to be the words of the divinity, *and not those selected by the organ of communication* [i.e. the human writer].”⁷⁶

During this writing process the writer was given a special, yet temporary, gift of infallibility.⁷⁷ While Hodge did state that “sacred writers were not machines,”⁷⁸ he also claimed that “all nations have entertained the belief not only that God has access to the human mind and can control its operations, but that He at times did take such possession of particular persons as to make them the organs of his communications.”⁷⁹ In order to explain this conundrum, Hodge

⁷³ Ibid., 1:170.

⁷⁴ “The sacred writers were not machines. Their self-consciousness was not suspended; nor were their intellectual powers suspended. Holy men spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost . . . Moreover, as inspiration did not involve the suspension or suppression of the human faculties, so neither did it interfere with the free exercise of the distinctive mental characteristics of the individual. If a Hebrew was inspired, he spake Hebrew; if a Greek, he spake Greek; if an educated man, he spoke as a man of culture; if uneducated, he spoke as such a man is wont to speak. If his mind was logical, he reasoned, as Paul did; if emotional and contemplative, he wrote as John wrote.” Ibid., 1:157.

⁷⁵ Emphasis is mine. Ibid., 1:157.

⁷⁶ Emphasis is mine. Ibid., 1:165.

⁷⁷ “This of course does not imply that the sacred writers were infallible except for the special purpose for which they were employed. They were not imbued with plenary knowledge. As to all matters of science, philosophy, and history, they stood on the same level with their contemporaries. They were infallible only as teachers, and when acting as the spokesman of God.” Ibid., 1:165.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 1:157.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 1:158.

appealed to the doctrine of predestination as a logical analogy. Hodge wrote, “If God, without interfering with a man’s free agency, can make it infallibly certain that he will repent and believe, He can render it certain that he will not err in teaching. It is vain to profess to hold to the common doctrine of Theism, and yet assert that God cannot control rational creatures without turning them into machines.”⁸⁰ Therefore, in reaction to liberalism, Hodge centralized the authority of Christianity within the Bible, the absolutely infallible Word of God.

Alister E. McGrath states, “The development of the ideas of ‘biblical infallibility’ or ‘inerrancy’ within Protestantism can be traced to the United States in the middle of the nineteenth century.”⁸¹ This would seem to assert that Charles Hodge and the Princeton Divines actually created a new doctrine of revelation-inspiration. While this may be true to some extent, many Christians that continue to endorse plenary inspiration reject this claim.⁸² Regardless of this disagreement, Roger E. Olson correctly states, “Without any doubt, then, Hodge presented one of the highest and most absolute views of the sole authority of Scripture in the history of Christian theology. Against what he perceived to be liberal Protestant theology’s diminution of that authority in favor of experience and reason, Hodge inflated the doctrine of Scripture to a role of prominence unparalleled before his time.”⁸³

As liberalism continued to gain ascendancy, the disciples of Hodge, such as B. B. Warfield,⁸⁴ continued to harden their stance. Numerous theologians began to rebel against such

⁸⁰ Ibid., 1:169.

⁸¹ McGrath, *Christian Theology*, 136.

⁸² Allison, *Historical Theology*, 76-77.

⁸³ Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology*, 559.

⁸⁴ Allison, *Historical Theology*, 75. According to Paul C. Gutjahr, “Warfield spent his career carefully crafting a position on the inerrant nature of the scriptures in their original manuscripts. It was a

absolute claims of Biblical infallibility, which were not limited to doctrinal facts, “but incidental circumstances, or facts of apparently minor importance.”⁸⁵ Before long, liberal reactionists began to assert that conservatives actually believed in a “paper pope.”⁸⁶ In fact, Paul C. Gutjahr elucidates, “Hodge’s thoughts on biblical inspiration as popularized through Warfield’s writings helped establish Hodge as a type of patron saint of inerrancy for countless twentieth-century Fundamentalist Bible colleges and seminaries.”⁸⁷ Clearly, Hodge and his loyal followers centralized authority within Scripture to an extreme degree when threatened by liberalism.⁸⁸

To Protect and Defend

The above three examples illustrate that in the mid to late nineteenth century, authority was often centralized in some way for the purpose of protection and defense. In the first example,

line of thinking Charles Hodge had hinted at, but had not codified with Warfield’s vigor.” Gutjahr, *Charles Hodge*, 382.

⁸⁵ Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 1:163.

⁸⁶ Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology*, 570-571; c.f. Hans Küng, *Infallible?: An Inquiry* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1971), 209.

⁸⁷ Gutjahr, *Charles Hodge*, 382.

⁸⁸ I actually empathize with Hodge’s intentions and believe he is to be commended for his great respect for the Scriptures. However, I do not fully agree with Hodge’s doctrine of revelation-inspiration. While I do believe that the Bible is inerrant in what it teaches, I also recognize some (very few) minor inconsistencies in the text. While some mistakes do exist, many “inconsistencies” can be shown to actually be “consistent” through faithful narrative analysis and by identifying the author’s intentions regarding their use of literary structure. Other “mistakes” could have been caused by scribal error. Nevertheless, the original human writer probably implemented some minor “errors” as well. Therefore, I agree with Hodge that the inspired writer has freedom in regard to language and style, but I also believe that the writer has some freedom in regard to word selection (meaning they were capable of making “typos”). The Holy Spirit, in harmony with these freedoms, guides the writer in regard to all that is written. Therefore, the Bible is the Word of God, infallible in its teachings. For more information see Fernando Canale, *The Cognitive Principle of Christian Theology: A Hermeneutical Study of the Revelation and Inspiration of the Bible* (Berrien Springs, MI: Fernando Canale, 2010); Norman R. Gulley, *Systematic Theology: Prolegomena* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2003), 229-385. For a historical analysis of the differing views of revelation-inspiration within early Seventh-day Adventism, see Denis Kaiser’s forthcoming dissertation.

Americans, threatened by civil war and the volatile atmosphere of Reconstruction, were willing to sacrifice some of their freedoms so that peace could be restored. Therefore, a nation-state was formed and tremendous authority given to that one government. The second case study emphasizes a similar trend. For Catholic Christians during the nineteenth century, the looming threat of Gallicanism and other “enlightened” ideas such as modernism, liberalism, secularism, and nationalism allowed centralized authority to be seen as the only way to regain respect within the world. As a result, the Catholic Church placed utmost spiritual authority into the hands of one man—the Bishop of Rome.

The claims of Charles Hodge provide a third example of the centralization of authority. In this case, Hodge and other Protestant Christians in America were assailed by liberal theories and ideas. Hodge wisely turned to Scripture, but in the midst of crisis he made reactionary assertions that took Biblical authority too far. As a result, many Protestants found solace in a “paper pope,” which led to the abuse⁸⁹ of the one true source of Christian teachings—the Holy Bible. Therefore, these three sketches help to highlight the universal principle: When threatened, people tend to centralize authority in someone or something for the purpose of protection.⁹⁰

⁸⁹ One of the abuses I have in mind here is the concept of “proof-texting,” which is a logical outgrowth of an infallible book of proof statements.

⁹⁰ I wish to thank Darius Jankiewicz for pointing out this insight to me.