Ryan M. McGraw (ed.)

Charles Hodge

American Reformed Orthodox Theologian

V&R



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Several streams converged, resulting in this project. First, Crossway asked me to contribute a chapter on Princeton on original sin in their academic line to a forthcoming volume entitled, *Ruined Sinners to Reclaim*. Being surprised by what I found, this led me to see the need for studying broader continuities and discontinuities between Reformed orthodoxy and "Old Princeton" theology. I thank Johnny and David Gibson for pressing me out of my comfort zone to participate in this project.

Second, I served as a critical reader for Scott Cook's ThM thesis at Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary. Scott treated shifts in defining God's attributes in nineteenth century American Presbyterian thought, sometimes contrasting authors like Hodge with earlier Reformed orthodox precedents. This led me to see once again the need for larger trajectories in the history of ideas related to figures like Hodge. As Scott pulled his research into a larger PhD project, I not only wanted to expand his research into other areas, but I wanted him on the team to write a chapter in this book, which turned into a chapter and a half, due to our common interest in the Trinity. Scott both spurred on the idea for this book and contributed much to its pages.

Third, I regularly teach a course on Prolegomena and I always felt a bit hazy in my understanding of the shift on historical treatments of theology as a science, all of which seemed to hover around post-Enlightenment contexts. Astute students asking good questions pressed me to seek greater clarity and understanding on this issue, leading to my chapter on theology as a science in this volume.

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Now that this book has taken shape, thanks are due to many people. First, I thank the contributors for their patience with me as a brutal editor, often adding to their already heavy workloads. All the authors worked very hard in bringing their expertise to bear on their given topics, patiently wading through my comments and often stretching themselves beyond their fields of expertise at various points. It has been a joy and blessing to work with you all.

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Second, editors always need critical feedback as well. This is how we learn in research and writing. John Fesko graciously lent his time as a brutal editor in his own right to give me exactly the kind of criticism on my own material in this book. John sent my chapter on Theology as a Science bleeding with comments and exclamation marks. In the end, we may not see eye to eye on some of my conclusions about Hodge's views and the reasons behind them. However, this is what has made my friendship with John so fruitful over the years. We love and respect each other as brothers and friends in the Lord, and as historians and systematic theologians. I have likely learned much more from John than he has from me over the years, but I thank him for being a diligent student of history and a friend willing to help me make my own work better more times than I can count. I dedicate this volume to him as a small token of thanks.

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Introduction

Charles Hodge (1797–1878) was one of the most important American Reformed theologians of the nineteenth-century, representing a benchmark in the "Old Princeton" theological tradition. He lived during a time of seismic change, affecting cultural, social, and scientific ideas, through a period including the American Civil War and its aftermath. As professor of Systematic Theology at Princeton Seminary, he influenced an inter-denominational group of ministers and missionaries, extending his influence far beyond the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America. Studying Hodge's life and theology provides a snapshot of a pivotal period of development in American history and culture. He also identified himself both as an American and as a Reformed theologian.

The primary thesis of this volume is that Charles Hodge was an American theologian who self-consciously sought to defend and transmit Reformed orthodoxy into an American context, reflecting the persistence and change of ideas. This is important because most studies of Hodge, and other Princeton theologians, highlight their American context at length while neglecting how tightly they wove Reformed orthodox ideas into their thought. Hodge's theology is marked by the persistence of Reformed orthodoxy as well as by changes resulting from issues that arose within nineteenth-century America. Hodge was aware of some of these American influences on his theology, but other issues affected him of which he was unaware, or at least less aware. Following a historical introduction bv Paul Gujhar, the areas chosen for this study include Hodge's use of philosophy (Aza Goudriaan) his definition of theology as a science (Ryan McGraw), his doctrine of God (Scott Cook), his use of personhood language in relation to the Trinity (Cook and McGraw) his treatment of the imputation of Adam's sin (C. N. Willborn), his delineation of church offices (Alan Strange), the controversy in which he debated the validity of Roman Catholic baptism (Mark Herzer), and his conception of Christ's presence in the Lord's Supper (Stefan Lindholm).

Each of these areas illustrate a clear point of continuity with Reformed orthodox teaching as well as a distinctively American twist in Hodge's ideas. The first two chapters establish Hodge's historical and philosophical contexts, stressing both his Reformed orthodoxy and his engagement with a wide range of early modern and modern philosophers. Remaining chapters treat targeted areas of Hodge's theology that illustrate persistence with Reformed orthodoxy and change in nineteenth century America. His definition and method of theology drew from medieval and early Reformed authors, while adjusting his evaluation of theology as a science in light of post-enlightenment definitions of science and scientific progress. His

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explanation of the divine attributes both built upon and altered historic Reformed orthodox ideas at key points. Hodge's treatment of the Trinity broadly retained the catholic Christian doctrine, while reflecting shifting definitions of personhood in the nineteenth century, and using "subordination" langue that was relatively unusual in earlier church history. Retaining the imputation of Adam's sin as grounded in high Reformed orthodox views of the covenant of works, he redefined the nature of imputation in light of American controversies, especially related to New England theology and fears of pantheism. While Hodge's church polity had historic precedent in Presbyterianism, American debates over the nature and number of church offices, and the grounds on which he defended the validity of Roman Catholic baptism reflected some new avenues of thought. Lastly, both picking up and rejecting strands of earlier Reformed thought and melding them with the Westminster Standards, his description of Christ presence in the Lord's Supper and his debates with John Williamson Nevin were colored by his concerns with modern pantheistic theologies.

The purpose of each chapter is primarily historical rather than dogmatic, aiming to understand Hodge's ideas in context. Spanning between Reformed orthodoxy and nineteenth century America broadens this context, attempting to build large-scale trajectories in Reformed thought and helping to fill a relative vacuum in this area of studies. Believing that historians can seek to be objective without claiming to be neutral, we have adopted the method of trying to "see things their way" by stressing historical contexts and explanations more than contemporary uses and categories. Most of the authors here are connected to the Reformed tradition in some way, and many disagree with each other at points regarding the degree of continuity and discontinuity between Hodge and his Reformed predecessors. Many more of us would have even more disagreements over whether we regard Hodge's ideas on each point treated good or bad. All of us have sought to understand and explain Hodge's ideas better with an eye to nineteenth century American and the early modern sources on which he relied so heavily. Regardless of what opinions readers hold currently about Hodge, they should approach this material with open minds as they wade through the difficult philosophical, scientific, political, and religious issues that contributed to who Hodge was, what he did, and why. Due to the complexity of topics treated, some of these chapters are better able to illustrate the fact that things were different in nineteenth century America than why they were so.

Every scholar invited to contribute to this volume either has expertise in Reformed orthodoxy, nineteenth-century America, or some combination of the two. Seeking to press authors to wed these two fields, the editor has provided contributors with a set of issues and questions necessary to bridge the gap between Reformed orthodox and American theological studies in relation to Hodge's self-identification with both. The goal is to provide a comparison between Hodge's views and earlier Reformed thought to explain the transmission and transformation of ideas more

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clearly. All authors were required to contextualize their subjects in order to furnish readers with the widest context possible, both for Hodge, and for the ideas that he built upon or modified. As such, this project both drew from the expertise of each author and pressed them beyond it either into later or earlier centuries.

Hoping to break fresh ground by connecting two rarely intersecting fields of historical Reformed theology, the editor hopes to shed light on broader developments and trajectories in the history of ideas. Only by recovering the Reformed orthodox background from which Hodge drew can we truly appreciate how his post-Enlightenment American context affected his thought. This broad approach to investigating American Reformed theology indicates the importance of a constructing a more complex and far-reaching context for Hodge's thought than many have attempted up to this point. Expanding this context will better help readers understand how older ideas both carried over and shifted in nineteenth century America. The field for further research along these lines is currently wide open, and we hope that this volume will serve as a starting point in the conversation. Beginning with this volume, the emerging picture is that Charles Hodge was both an American and a Reformed orthodox theologian.

Ryan M. McGraw
Editor

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Paul C. Gutjahr

1. Reflections on the Life and Thought of Charles Hodge

1.1 Foundations

Theologians and their theologies do not spring from a vacuum. They are born of a complex mixture of cultural, historical and personal factors. Such is the case of Charles Hodge, perhaps America's most important nineteenth-century Reformed theologian. This chapter seeks to tease out some of the dialogical interplay between Hodge the man and the times in which he lived, in order to better understand his pivotal role in helping to craft a highly influential, and often uniquely American, brand of Reformed theology.

The Hodges of Philadelphia were a distinguished and affluent family for much of the eighteenth century. Immigrating to the American colonies from Ireland in the 1730s, three Hodge brothers had quickly established themselves as successful sea merchants in one of the colonies busiest port cities.[1] Andrew, the most successful of the brothers, bought a number of ships, began a provisioning business for sea-going vessels, built a large warehouse, established a prosperous store, and controlled his own dock on the Philadelphia waterfront. In the years leading up to the American Revolution, he became one of the city's wealthiest and most important citizens, and many of his sons rose to become influential businessmen and sea captains tied to Philadelphia's maritime economy.[2]

Charles Hodge was the son of Hugh Hodge, the eighth child of Andrew Hodge. By the time Charles was born on December 27, 1797, the once influential and aristocratic Hodge family of Philadelphia was in decline. The diminished state of the Hodge family's merchant trade due to the war for independence from Britain was at least partly responsible for Huge Hodge's decision to move away from the well-worn commercial paths of his family.[3] Hugh leaned into his keen interest in science to pursue the profession of medicine. It was a career choice that would lead to his death in 1798. While treating patients during a series of devastating Yellow Fever outbreaks that ravaged Philadelphia, Hugh ultimately succumbed to the disease. Charles was barely six months old when his father died.

1 A. A. Hodge, *Life of Charles Hodge* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1880), 1.

2 Frank Willing Leach, "The Philadelphia of our Ancestors," *North American*, Sunday, June 14, 1908, 1.

3 Hugh L. Hodge, *Memoranda of Family History Dictated by Hugh L. Hodge* (n. p.: 1903), 20–21.

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Thus, Hodge spent his earliest years cared for by his mother, Mary, and a circle of Philadelphia family and friends. Descended from French Huguenot stock, Mary was renowned for her Christian piety and unusually keen intellect.[4] Hodge's lifelong commitment to education can be traced, at least in part, to his mother's own immense intellectual giftedness and lifelong love of learning. Throughout his life, Hodge recounted vivid memories of his mother's penchant to recite lines from Dryden and Pope, and she took a profound interest in every phase of her sons' educations. Mary made significant sacrifices to see that her sons were educated. In order to pay for their primary and secondary schooling, she took boarders into her home and undertook small paying jobs.[5] At one point, due to a series of financial stresses culminating in the government embargos enacted during the War of 1812 and their effect on the last remnants of her family holdings tied to the once great Hodge sea trade, Mary had to sell her family home and commence a pattern of frequent moves within and around Philadelphia in order to continue to care for, and educate, Hodge and his elder brother, Hugh.

In Hodge's ancestry and formative years, one finds key pillars of his lifelong character and inclinations. The devout Protestant nature of his mother and the deep Presbyterian roots of the Hodge family would be a continual guide in his ecclesiastical and theological thinking. Hodge not only joined the Presbyterian Church upon his conversion in 1815, but spent the remainder of his life developing into one of its most important leaders. One wonders if the peripatetic existence that Mary and her sons in Hodge's earliest years found its answer in Hodge's later contentment in residing for almost his entire life in the small town of Princeton, New Jersey. The economic vicissitudes that so battered his family in his youth made him keenly aware of property rights and markers of social standing, sensitivities that would have great bearing on his own thinking when it came to his Federalist-leaning political views and issues such as slavery. His attachment to the forms and doctrines of Presbyterianism and his highly structured, largely unchanging, theological hermeneutic raise the distinct possibility that Hodge found in such a structured religious tradition a means of stabilizing his world when that world had started off with such vast gulfs of vulnerability and uncertainty.

1.2 Education

Hodge became an undergraduate at Princeton College in 1812. By the time he entered the College, its curriculum had been deeply influenced by the teaching and

4 Hodge, *Life of Charles Hodge*, 8.

5 Hodge, *Memoranda of Family History Dictated by Hugh L. Hodge*, 24–25.

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intellectual commitments of John Witherspoon. When Witherspoon took over the presidency of Princeton College in 1768, he ushered in a new era in the school's history. He put a pronounced emphasis on preparing men not only for the ministry, but also for professions in the realms of law, politics, education, medicine, and business. He also brought a new philosophical orientation to the College, a thorough commitment to Scottish Common Sense Realism. This philosophical commitment would become the dominant intellectual school of thought in American higher education up through the Civil War, and it also became an absolute bulwark in Hodge's own theological thinking.[6]

Founded on the writings of Francis Hutcheson, Thomas Reid, and Dugald Stewart, Scottish Common Sense Philosophy highlighted the serious Enlightenment engagement with science without losing science and philosophy's connection to religious belief.[7] At its core, this school of philosophical thought held out two central truths. First, it taught that some basic truths were self-evident. Being a careful and patient observer made truth accessible to anyone through one's ordinary "common" sense, and thus the sense could be trusted to provide a sound basis for all scientific, philosophical, and theological endeavors. For those who believed in Common Sense Realism, all of God's manifold work and his very presence in the world was a fact available and verifiable to all thoughtful observers. This notion of the observable nature of truth was refined and popularized for Common Sense Realists by the seventeenth-century scientist and natural philosopher, Francis Bacon, who pursued such observable truth through developing structured methods of inductively investigating natural and intellectual phenomena so as to be able to separate truth from fallacy.[8] Second, Scottish Realism contained a pronounced ethical dimension; it taught that all people in addition to their five senses had a common moral sense that allowed them to distinguish between good and evil. It was the Common Sense belief in self-evident truth, and the mind's ability to systematically and thoroughly investigate that truth, which would come to define Hodge's own theological thinking.

By the time Hodge entered Princeton College, Witherspoon had been dead for nearly two decades, and the archly conservative Ashbel Green held the College's presidency. Green's tenure was marked by a clear emphasis on training young

6 Lawrence A. Cremin, *American Education: The National Experience 1783–1876* (New York: Harper and Row, 1980), 27.

7 A helpful overview of Scottish Common Sense philosophy in America is found in Mark A. Noll, "Common Sense Traditions and American Evangelical Thought," *American Quarterly* 37, no. 2 (1985): 220–225.

8 The importance of Bacon in Scottish Common Sense and Presbyterian thought finds its fullest treatment in Theodore Dwight Bozeman, *Protestants in an Age of Science: The Baconian Ideal and Antebellum Religious Thought* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1977).

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men for the ministry. He instituted a reactionary curriculum for the time, moving away from Witherspoon's practical and commerce-friendly course of study in areas touching on science, modern languages, and mathematics. Instead, Green placed renewed emphasis on the classical languages and the study of the Bible. Hodge entered Princeton College as Green turned back the school's curriculum to content that had been popular in higher education a century earlier. Such a religious focus was further accented by the fact that Princeton Theological Seminary was founded during Green's presidency, and many of the College's students went on to do their ministerial training at the College's neighboring seminary. Thus, Hodge's undergraduate experience was marked by Green's return to traditional, eighteenth-century Presbyterian notions of higher education, which along with classical language work and biblical studies once again foregrounded Witherspoon's lectures on moral philosophy, a curriculum that had withered in the years after Witherspoon's death, as well as the mandatory reading of William Paley's writings on natural philosophy.[9]

Amid Green's focus on raising up the country's next generation of clergy, Hodge spent the majority of his undergraduate years doing everything he could to be prepared for pursuing a career in medicine. Hodge not only followed his father in his career aspirations, but also in enjoying a deep and abiding interest in all things scientific.[10] Throughout his life, Hodge never tired of reading about the newest scientific developments, and he proved unfailing in willingness to converse with faculty and students both at Princeton College and Princeton Theological Seminary about how science buttressed Christian belief. His interest in science and scientific methodologies would constantly inflect his theological writings in the decades to come.[11]

Green's emphasis on the making religion a prominent part of life at Princeton College bore its most notable fruit in a revival that swept through the institution in the winter of 1815. This revival brought forty of the College's 105 students to

9 Mark A. Noll, *Princeton and the Republic, 1768–1822* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), 275. Darrel Guder, "History of Belles Lettres at Princeton" (Ph.D. diss., University of Hamburg, 1964): 227; 234. The most comprehensive treatment of the use of Paley's works in American colleges is Wilson Smith, "William Paley's Theological Utilitarianism in America," WMQ 11:2 (Apr. 1954): 402–424.

10 Ronald L. Numbers, "Charles Hodge and the Beauties and Deformities of Science," in *Charles Hodge Revisited: A Critical Appraisal of His Life and Work*, eds. John W. Stewart and James H. Moorhead (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2002), 77. This essay provides a good overview of Hodge's lifelong interest in the connections between theology and science.

11 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), 379–381. Walter H. Conser, Jr. *God and the Natural World: Religion and Science in Antebellum America* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1993), 65–74. Bozeman, *Protestants in an Age of Science*, 154–159.

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a profession of faith. Hodge was one such convert, and his profession of faith prompted him to decide near the end of his senior year to swerve away from an intended medical career to pursue the ministry instead. As a result, at the age of eighteen Hodge began his studies at Princeton Theological Seminary, putting himself under the tutelage and care of the Seminary's two founding faculty members: Archibald Alexander and Samuel Miller. Hodge would become particularly close to Alexander, who would take on a father role for the fatherless Hodge.

The training of Alexander and Miller at the Seminary highlighted a brand of Reformed, Calvinist theology that placed a premium on exalting God's glory through stressing his omnipotence and absolute sovereignty.[12] Central to their thinking was the conviction that it was God who orchestrated every aspect of his creation and that he was the pivotal catalyst in human salvation. Such a stress on God's absolute control over all aspects of humanity would become the hallmark attribute of the theology that would be taught at the Seminary throughout the nineteenth century and would later come to be called more colloquially "The Princeton Theology."[13]

Alexander and Miller shaped the Seminary's curriculum primarily around the Westminster Confession (1646), but they also incorporated thinking found in the confessional statements of the Second Helvetic Confession (1566) and the Canons of Dort (1619). Although bearing some differences, each of these confessions clearly upheld firm doctrinal statements on the sovereignty of God and the totally depraved nature of humanity. To knit together the strands running through all three of these confessional statements, they turned most notably to the apologetic work of Swiss Reformed Theologian Francis Turretin and the emphasis on systematic, inductive reasoning and notions of self-evident truth found in Witherspoon's brand of Scottish Common Sense philosophy.[14] Other important religious thinkers in Alexander and Miller's seminary curriculum included the English politician and writer Soame Jenyns, the natural philosopher and English clergyman William Paley, and English Presbyterian Puritan John Flavel.[15] At Princeton Seminary, students were taught an unwavering view of God's sovereignty and a firm conviction that God's sovereignty was self-evident both in the natural truths found in God's creation and the revealed truths found in the Holy Scriptures.[16]

Such confessional statements, along with Turretin's three-volume *Institutes of Elenctic Theology* (1679–1685), formed the basis for Hodge's own systematic ap-

12 Holifield, *Theology in America*, 11.

13 David F. Wells, ed., *The Princeton Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1989), 17–24.

14 Mark A. Noll, ed., *The Princeton Theology, 1812–1921* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1983), 13; 27–33.

15 Lefferts A. Loetscher, *Facing the Enlightenment and Pietism* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1983), 17–26. Holified, *Theology in America*, 379–380.

16 Holifield, *Theology in America*, 378–387.

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proach to Christian doctrine in the years to come. Hodge was so thoroughly tied to Turretin in his own teaching that he had the Swiss theologian's *Institutes* translated from Latin into English, with the purpose of widening Turretin's influence among American Christians.[17] When it later came time for Hodge to compose his own course of lectures on systematic theology at the Seminary that eventuated in his magisterial *Systematic Theology,* many points of the work's organization can be seen to largely, if not entirely, echo Turretin's *Institutes* in his commitment to addressing the central topics found in the Westminster Confession.

1.3 Influence

Hodge had originally intended to go into the Presbyterian pastorate, but a year after his graduation he was offered a one-year lectureship position in biblical languages at the Seminary. His natural linguistic ability made him a good fit for this position, and his decision to accept this lectureship led to joining the Seminary's faculty for the remainder of his life. At first, Hodge struggled with the idea of staying at the Seminary, fearing that he might be missing more exciting and consequential frontline ministry opportunities either pastoring his own church or taking a post on a mission field. In the end, however, he accepted the lectureship because he believed it to be the place where he might be able to exercise the most influence. In pastoring a congregation, he would touch the lives of that single congregation. In teaching ministers, he had the opportunity to touch the lives of countless congregations.

This issue of influence would be a central theme throughout Hodge's life. He was a man driven by the need to make the most of his gifts and the most of his time. Forever echoing in his mind was a biblical refrain often repeated by his mother: "To whom much is given, much will be required."[18] In the years that followed, Hodge would pursue his quest for influence in three basic ways: through his teaching at the Seminary, through his publishing the premier Presbyterian journal of his day along writing with several books, and finally through his leadership in different associations such as the Presbyterian General Assembly and its numerous committees, various mission boards, and the Board of Trustees at Princeton College.

His long tenure as a professor of the seminary is perhaps his most recognized avenue of influence. During his fifty-six-year career, he taught over three thousand seminarians. No American professor of the era would teach a greater number of

17 J. Mark Beach, "Francis Turretin's *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*," in *The Oxford Handbook of Reformed Theology*, eds. Michael Allen and Scott R. Swain (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 291–292.

18 Mary Hodge to Hugh and Charles Hodge, January 13, 1810, Charles Hodge Papers, Firestone Library, Princeton University, Box 7, Folder 4.

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graduate students. His students would make their own marks as pastors, publishers, missionaries, educators, politicians, and seminary and college professors.

Another widely recognized avenue of influence for Hodge was the vast reach of his various publishing endeavors. Hodge was immensely savvy in recognizing early the power of print in the United States, a country which enjoyed the world's highest literacy rates in the early nineteenth century.[19] Such literacy rates led to an antebellum culture that one print historian has aptly characterized as one where "reading became a necessity of life."[20] Beginning in the 1820s, America's burgeoning print culture was unrivaled around the world for its volume and reach. America as a young democracy had come to hold an almost sacred belief in the power of print.[21] Print and the truth it could convey was one of the surest paths to an informed citizenry, and an informed citizenry was one of the surest paths to the kind of virtue needed to sustain a democratic form of government.[22]

Antebellum Christians fully embraced the promise offered through publishing, exhibiting an almost messianic faith in the power of the press. Whereas spreading God's word had once primarily been the realm of preachers, an unprecedented increase in the production and consumption of printed material in the opening decades of the nineteenth century led countless Protestants to believe that publishing's unrivaled reach would usher in a new age of mass conversions to Christ. Such Protestants were jubilant in their conviction that "types of lead and sheets of paper may be the light of the World."[23] Such optimism was fueled by the rise of several powerful Christian publishing enterprises, including the American Bible Society (1816), the American Sunday School Union (1824), and the American Tract Society (1825).[24] By the middle of the century, the output of these three societies accounted for approximately sixteen percent of all books produced in the United States.[25]

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19 Ronald J. Zboray, *A Fictive People: Antebellum Economic Development and the American Reading Public* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 196–201. Lee Soltow and Edward Stevens, *The Rise of Literacy and the Common School in the United States: A Socioeconomic Analysis to 1870* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 53, 56, 155–176, 189.

20 William J. Gilmore, *Reading Becomes a Necessity of Life: Material and Cultural Life in New England, 1780–1835* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1989), xxi.

21 Candy Gunther Brown, *The Word in the World: Evangelical Writing, Publishing, and Reading in America* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 1–2.

22 Derek H. Davis, *Religion and the Continental Congress, 1774–1789: Contributions to Original Intent* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000) 196.

23 Quoted in Joan Brumberg, *Mission for Life: The Judson Family and American Evangelical Culture* (New York: New York University Press, 1984), 67.

24 The best overview of religious publishing in this period can be found in David P. Nord, *Faith in Reading: Religious Publishing and the Birth of Mass Media in America, 1790–1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

25 Brown, *The Word in the World*, 51.

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Hodge was an early adopter of this move toward religiously didactic publishing as can be seen in his founding of the *Biblical Repertory* (later the *Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review*) in 1825, a quarterly theological journal he directed for nearly five decades. By editing over one hundred and twenty issues and contributing more than two hundred articles to its pages, Hodge established himself as a major voice in nearly every important religious controversy of his day. In addition to his articles for the *Repertory,* Hodge wrote several longer book-length works: Commentaries on four New Testament books (1835, 1856, 1857, 1859), a major history of the American Presbyterian Church (1839–40), the immensely popular devotional *The Way of Life* (1841), a landmark critique of Darwinism (1874), and his magnum opus, his *Systematic Theology* (1872–73). These writings gave Hodge's influence an international scope as he became one of the best known and most widely respected American theologians in Europe.

Hodge was also involved in a wide range of associations and governing bodies throughout his life. Through his leadership in these organizations, he was able to exercise great influence over the bodies they governed. Three groupings of governance bodies were particularly important to Hodge. The first of these was found in area of missionary activity. In the earliest years of Hodge's time on the Seminary faculty, he spent two years studying in Europe to better his understanding of German Higher biblical criticism and work on his ancient languages. Both endeavors were tied to his own desire to accurately interpret the Bible and teach methods of accurate biblical interpretation. While in Europe, Hodge gained a global view of Protestantism, and through that view he had become convinced of the vital importance of the United States in the efforts of world evangelization.

While in Europe, Hodge formulated a theory that vital Christian belief underwent certain cycles: "During one age, there are many revivals of religion, and a general prevalence of evangelical spirit and exertion; to this succeeds a period of coldness and declension; and to this either a period of revival or of open departure from the faith."[26] In contrast to the lack of religious fervor he witnessed in France and Germany, Hodge saw the massive and ubiquitous revivals happening in America as a sign that the United States was near the apex of its religious cycle. Such cresting religious fervor gave America an unrivaled ability at the time to spread the message of God grace throughout the world. Hodge never wavered in his desire to take advantage of America enjoying its high-water mark in terms of religious influence. Throughout his life, he never doubted that American missionary activity would be the means of converting innumerable unbelievers to the Christian faith.[27] He

26 Charles Hodge, "Lecture Addressed to the Students of the Theological Seminary," *Biblical Repertory: A Journal of Biblical Literature and Theological Review* 1, no. 1 (January 1829): 93.

27 Hodge had a particular bond with missionary activity in France. The best single account of this bond can be found in Richard Gardiner, "Princeton and Paris: An Early Nineteenth Century Bond

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showed this conviction as he served from the mid-1840s to 1870 on both the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions and the Presbyterian Board of Domestic Missions. He even served for two years as the president of the Board of Foreign Missions (1868–1870).[28]

The second governing body where he sought to extend his influence was the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church. Beginning in 1842, Hodge became a regular delegate to the General Assembly, representing the Seminary's needs and accomplishments to his Presbyterian brethren. He stretched the breadth of his influence in national Presbyterianism by remaining active in a number of national committees and boards sponsored by the General Assembly. In 1846, he was elected to the post of General Assembly's moderator. While his time as moderator was not particularly troubled, he did have to help the Assembly navigate two potentially divisive issues: the abolition of slavery and the establishment of Presbyterian parochial schools. For the former, he helped the Assembly take the middle ground of hoping the regrettable practice of slavery might eventually be abolished but not advocating any stance that held it unscriptural and thereby worthy of immediate elimination. When it came to Presbyterian parochial schools, Hodge favored establishing such a common school system sponsored by the denomination, wishing to establish such schools next to every Presbyterian Church in the nation. The initiative never gained the widespread support it needed to come into existence, but it was a cause Hodge spent his life supporting.[29]

Finally, Hodge exercised influence through helping to guide Princeton College as one of its trustees. Throughout his life, Hodge was a devoted alumnus of his *alma mater,* and in 1850 he was invited to take a seat on the College's board of trustees. He quickly established himself as one of its most respected members. He played a particularly important role when he was called upon to help the College choose a new president. Hodge's college classmate, John Maclean Jr., who had joined the College faculty at the age of twenty-three as a chemistry professor and had spent the next thirty-five years in the service of the College was being considered for the position when several trustees thought him too ordinary for the august position. Hodge played a pivotal role in changing their minds. John Maclean Jr. became Princeton's tenth president in 1854.

Perhaps Hodge's greatest contribution to the College while trustee, however, came in his unwavering commitment to "the religious character of the College," which he

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of Mission" (senior thesis, Princeton Theological Seminary, 1994). His missionary commitment within Presbyterianism is recounted in David Calhoun, "Last Command: Princeton Theological Seminary and Missions (1812–1862)," (PhD diss., Princeton Theological Seminary, 1983), 208.

28 Hodge, *Life of Charles Hodge*, 384.

29 Charles Hodge, "General Assembly, 1846," *Biblical Repertory and Princeton* Review 18, no. 3 (July 1846): 435.

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believed was the "first great aim of its administration."[30] While a trustee, he took a great interest in seeing that faculty who were appointed were both committed Christians and outstanding scholars in their disciplines. He also was largely responsible for the College maintaining its firm commitment to a liberal arts education that stressed the role of religion in learning. He championed a curriculum that avoided any overt professionalization and narrowness by stressing an educational regimen that eschewed the teaching of "science without literature, or literature without science."[31]

1.4 Scripture

While Hodge undertook various leadership roles, it is important to understand certain central beliefs that provided the engine that drove his influence. Perhaps the most fundamental of these beliefs was his view of Scripture. Hodge was a distinct product of, and advocate for, the Reformed tradition's stress on the importance of the Bible, and in no country was the Bible more prized as a religious and cultural cornerstone than in America. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, education laws were put in place in the colonies with the express purpose of enabling European Americans to read the Bible.[32] By the nineteenth century, copies of the Bible were widely circulated by various Christian societies with the goal of placing a copy of the Bible in every American household.[33]

High American literacy rates, coupled with the ability of these readers to gain access to the Bible, created a profound culture of individual biblical interpretation. The potential chaos of such individual interpretation needed to be controlled, and at Princeton that control came to center in a new view of the Bible itself. The centuries-long Christian tradition of biblical interpretation found in the Catholic Church, and even in early Protestantism had tended to emphasize the divine inspiration of the Bible's various interpreters. The Reformed centerpiece of *Sola Scriptura* changed this equation. Instead of emphasizing the divine inspiration of the Bible's interpreters, Princeton Seminary's faculty increasingly stressed the divine inspiration

30 Hodge, *Life of Charles Hodge*, 386.

31 Trustee Bound Volumes, 1868–1878, Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library, Princeton University Archives, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library, 5:649–650.

32 Robert E. Brown, "The Bible in the Seventeenth Century," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Bible in America*, ed. Paul C. Gutjahr (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 80–82.

33 Paul C. Gutjahr. *An American Bible: A History of the Good Book in the United States, 1777–1880* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), 32–33.

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and infallibility of the Bible itself.[34] In their minds, the Bible's core text was such that its divinely-inspired nature gave it a kind of stability that would help guide and control its interpretation.

Hodge played a pivotal role in espousing the stability of the text, especially in light of the rise of modern textual criticism. Leaning heavily on his belief in Scottish Common Sense philosophy, Hodge argued that the Bible could help control its own interpretation because it was an absolutely reliable text which the common reader could study to be led by its divinely inspired self-evident and self-enforcing truths.[35] Hodge used his commitment to Scottish Common Sense to proclaim that the Bible was "a plain book", readily accessible with its clear truths to every person of normal intellect.[36] This emphasis mirrored earlier Reformed approaches to the perspicuity of Scripture, such as that represented by Turretin, but Hodge reoriented the doctrine line light of modern philosophy. In his Common Sense approach to biblical interpretation, he offered a useful philosophical underpinning to help Christians sort out for themselves the truest biblical interpretations as they were confronted with myriad options offered them by competing preachers and denominations. He, and other more conservative Protestants of this period, tirelessly advocated a view that the Bible could be readily and rightly understood by the common reader.[37] This was standard historic Reformed emphasis, but presented in a new way.

Thus, for Hodge and countless others in this period, the plain, self-evident, and stable Bible came to take on the character of a giant repository of fixed truths and proof texts available to anyone. Such an approach was relatively new as earlier Reformed authors tended to present the Bible as an unfolding message about knowing God. For Hodge, Scripture was a scientific textbook full of data. Perhaps most famously, Hodge captured this Common Sense view of the Scriptures at the outset of his *Systematic Theology.* Here, Hodge stated that the Bible was a magnificent "store-house of facts."[38] Furthermore, he argued that it was the duty of every Christian "to ascertain, collect, and combine all the facts which God has revealed concerning himself and our relation to him. These facts are all in the Bible. . . . It is in this sense that 'The Bible, and the Bible alone, is the religion of the

34 Jerry Wayne Brown, *The Rise of Biblical Criticism in America, 1800–1870* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1969), 5.

35 Mark A. Noll, "Common Sense Traditions and American Evangelical Thought," in *American Quarterly* 37 (Summer 1985): 220–5.

36 Charles Hodge, "The Inspiration of Holy Scripture," *Biblical Repertory and Princeton* Review 29, no. 4 (October 1857): 664.

37 Mark Noll, *America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 93–103.

38 Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1872), 10.

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Protestants.'"[39] In this way, Hodge held that the teachings of the Bible were not available to only a select few, but to all who took time to carefully investigate its content.

Hodge's Common Sense approach to the Bible became particularly important as German Higher Criticism increasingly came to influence various ways American clergy and laypeople read the Bible. Higher Criticism sought to rise above the mere examination of words and sentence structures to consider a biblical book's authorship, literary tradition and historical setting. In Protestant Germany, the study of the Bible had moved outside the confines of Church structures and found a home in German universities. This also reflected the fact, that in contrast to preceding centuries, theology was no longer the primary focus and purpose of European universities. Here, scholars increasingly treated the Bible like any other ancient literary text, often stressing its form and function, rather than its divine nature. Thus, one of the great challenges facing the Bible as it entered the nineteenth century centered on how scholars at leading American universities began to treat the book not as solely a product of divine authorship, but of human authorship as well.[40] Many influential American biblical scholars came to view the Bible's stories as they would any story from ancient Middle Eastern source material.[41] As Higher Critics began to use different literary and historical approaches to the biblical text, they posited new theories concerning the authorship of various biblical books. Debates arose surrounding the belief that Moses wrote the Pentateuch, with many Higher Critics arguing that a number of different authors had composed books such as Genesis.[42] Higher Criticism came to argue against a host of traditional beliefs about the Bible, which in the minds of many conservative American Protestants destabilized a firm belief in a divinely-inspired Bible. This type of reasoning raised questions as to how classic Protestant views of Scripture could persist in light of contemporary scholarship. Hodge sought both to retain and develop standard Reformed approaches to Scripture in this light.

German philosophy in general and the type of historicism encouraged by Higher Criticism in particular led to new ideas about human language that challenged traditional views that words had eternally fixed meanings as determined by God and transmitted through the Scriptures. Adopting and adapting the views of German Idealists like Immanuel Kant, Johann Ficte, Friedrich Schelling, and G. W. F. Hegel, Higher Critics held to a more fluid view of language, arguing that words were simply

39 Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1872), 10–11.

40 Philip F. Gura, *American Transcendentalism: A History* (New York: Hill & Wang, 2007), 31.

41 Debby Applegate, *The Most Famous Man in America: The Biography of Henry Ward Beecher* (New York: Doubleday, 2006), 120.

42 Gura, *American Transcendentalism: A History*, 25.

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arbitrary markers for ideas. [43] Eschewing the type of clear empiricism championed by Hodge and Scottish Common Sense philosophy, Higher Critics propounded that the meaning of words could change over time and in different cultural settings.

Central to German idealism was the belief that humans had an innate, often emotional, intuitive faculty that allowed them to make sense of their world. German Idealism as practiced among liberal American Christians such as William Ellery Channing, Theodore Parker, and Ralph Waldo Emerson cut against the beliefs taught by Scottish Common Sense by unsettling the conviction that the mind was the court of first and last resort in understanding both language and the physical world.[44] For such thinkers, the heart was a necessary, and often a superior, means of understanding the world. By the middle of the nineteenth century, such views were gaining ground among American Trinitarian Protestants. Leading Congregational figures such as Horace Bushnell, Edwards Amasa Park, and Henry Ward Beecher championed the notion that there was an intuitive, heart-centered faculty that was essential to understanding the Scriptures.[45]

Park, in particular, became a leading voice for more Romantic notions of scriptural interpretation when he argued that biblical language was best interpreted by using different modes of understanding. According to Park, the intellect or "logical consciousness" was the best means of understanding matters expressed in the language of propositional and literal truths.[46] On the other hand, he believed that the heart or the "'intuitive consciousness" was the best means of understanding God's truth as it was communicated in emotion-evoking images through figurative language.[47] Park saw figurative language as appealing to one's affections, making it more elastic and less precise in its meanings.[48] He taught that not every passage in the Bible was "intended for logical proof; they may have been designed for passionate appeals and figure into the shape of argument, not to convince the reason but to carry the heart by a strong assault."[49]

Of course, more conservative Christians such as Hodge thought such double-mindedness in biblical interpretation was nonsense. Disturbed by Park's musings

43 Jurgen Herbst, *The German Historical School in American Scholarship* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1965), 73–97.

44 Gura, *American Transcendentalism: A History*, 50–53; 66–67.

45 Barbara M. Cross, *Horace Bushnell: Minister to a Changing America* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 109. Applegate, *The Most Famous Man in America: The Biography of Henry Ward Beecher*, 133.

46 Edwards Amasa Park, *The Theology of the Intellect and of the Feelings* (Andover, MA: Warren F. Draper, 1850), 4.

47 Charles Hodge, "The Theology of the Intellect and that of the Feelings," *Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review* 22, no. 4 (October 1850), 646.

48 Park, *The Theology of the Intellect and of the Feelings*, 6.

49 Park, *The Theology of the Intellect and of the Feelings*, 9.

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about interpretative elasticity and different modes of apprehending truth, Hodge entered into a two-year titanic periodical battle against Park during which the two men exchanged a series of essays published in Hodge's *Biblical Repertory* and Park's own journal *Bibliotheca Sacra.* Throughout, Hodge held fast to the traditional Reformed line of reasoning, which argued the Bible was a wholly reliable document and it taught only "one definite form of faith."[50] The Bible's contents were fully comprehensible through a commonsense use of reason. Hodge, and those like him, were particularly aggrieved by Park's German Idealist school of thought, which held that theology derived from reason alone often found itself antiquated by scientific advances, whereas theology interpreted through the heart need not "always accommodate itself to scientific changes, but may often use its old statements, even if, when literally understood, they be incorrect, and it thus abides as permanent as are the main impressions of truth."[51] Hodge found this denigration of Scriptural truth fantastically dangerous. For him, any truth revealed in Scripture always held up amid scientific scrutiny because the truths of science always agreed with the truths found in the Bible.

In this way, Hodge laid the groundwork for later Princeton theologians to establish a view of inerrant scriptures that would be widely adopted by conservative American Christians throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Perhaps the most famous of these inerrant defenses came in 1881 from Hodge's son, Archibald Alexander, and the formidable Presbyterian theologian Benjamin Warfield. The younger Hodge and Warfield gave no quarter to scientific attacks on the content of the Bible or romantic notions of the language it contained. They argued for the total trustworthiness of the Christian Scriptures, stating that "the Scriptures not only contain, but ARE THE WORD OF GOD, and hence that all their elements and all their affirmations were absolutely errorless, and binding the faith and obedience of men."[52] It was a view Hodge himself held close for his entire life.[53]

50 Hodge, "The Theology of the Intellect and that of the Feelings," 659.

51 Park, *The Theology of the Intellect and of the Feelings*, 10.

52 Archibald Alexander Hodge and Benjamin B. Warfield, "Inspiration", *Presbyterian Review* 2 (April 1881): 237.

53 David L. Kelsey, "Charles Hodge as Interpreter of Scripture," in *Charles Hodge Revisited: A Critical Appraisal of His Life and Work*, eds. John W. Stewart and James H. Moorhead (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2002), 218.

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1.5 Hermeneutic

As important as it was to his thinking, Hodge's firm commitment to an errorless text does not fully illuminate how he chose to interpret that text. His manner of interpreting the Bible – or his hermeneutic – needs further explication in order to not only understand what he taught and published, but also how his theological thinking was later adopted by other biblical expositors who followed in his footsteps. Hodge's biblical hermeneutic was built on the twin pillars of Scottish Commonsense Philosophy and a commitment to the Reformed tradition as it was articulated in the Westminster Confession and by such figures as Francis Turretin and John Calvin. His interpretations would often toggle between these twin pillars, stressing one more than the other depending on the particular passages studied, or issues being addressed. Benjamin Warfield, the Princeton theologian who came to dominate the Seminary's intellectual life after Hodge's death, wrote of his predecessor that "few men could equal" Hodge in his ability to capture a passage's "general flow of thought," while he saw Hodge as having little patience for "the technicalities of exegesis."[54] Warfield saw Hodge's biblical interpretations as often guided by a "theological predilection," which rose out of the teachings of famous Reformers and the history of the Church.[55] It should also be remembered that Hodge was not immune to having his biblical hermeneutic influenced by his own personal history as well, as his life experience can sometimes be detected in his expositions of Scripture.

The power of a Common Sense-inflected hermeneutic is seen not only in his view that the Bible was full of readily accessible self-evident truths, but also in the way Hodge approached ascertaining those truths. One of the clearest examples of his thinking in this regard comes across in his biblical arguments supporting slavery. In an article simply entitled "Slavery" and published in the 1836 *Biblical Repertory*, Hodge offered what he hoped would be a straightforward, and thus, universally embraced articulation of the Bible's teaching on the topic of slavery. His central, Common Sense point was simple: Slavery had existed in the time of Christ and nowhere does Jesus or any other biblical author condemn it. He asked if the emancipation of slaves was such a clear Christian mandate, why did Christ and his apostles never posit such a position. Furthermore, why had Paul and other biblical authors offered instructions to slave owners without ever advocating widespread emancipation?[56] Hodge was strongly in favor of gradual emancipation, for he saw slavery as a flawed social institution that denigrated the dignity of both men and

54 Hodge, *Life of Charles Hodge*, 589.

55 Hodge, *Life of Charles Hodge*, 590.

56 Charles Hodge, "Slavery," *Biblical Repertory and Theological* Review 8, no. 2 (April 1836): 277.

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women, but he argued there was no biblical precedent for categorically forbidding it.[57]

Hodge's views on the issue of slavery are also a place where one can detect the inflection of his own life experience on his interpretative practice. Since the poverty of his nomadic youth, Hodge was personally interested and invested in notions of social stability and individual property rights. The government's actions during the Revolution and the War of 1812 had helped wipe out the fortunes of his family, so he was acutely aware what sweeping national policies could do to the welfare of individual (in this case, white) citizens. He had also owned two slaves, and he was firmly convinced that he had been entrusted with their care to help better their lives.[58] These life experiences influenced his thinking about slavery. He justified the institution by making a crucial distinction between slaveholding and slave laws.[59] Slaveholding was not condemned by Scripture, but how slaveholding was enacted through slave laws was subject to biblical teaching on how God commanded people to treat one another. In Hodge's eyes, slavery only became a sin when the laws that governed it ran counter to the commands of God.[60]

Hodge's hermeneutic and its dependence on historical precedent finds one of its best examples in how he chose to argue against the tidal wave of anti-Catholic sentiment in his day to defend Roman Catholic baptism. Hodge stood firm in his defense of the efficacy of Catholic baptism, a stance that made him immensely unpopular with many of his Presbyterian brethren when, in 1845, he refused to join the Presbyterian General Assembly in denouncing the efficacy of Roman Catholic baptism. When he heard of the General Assembly's vote in that year to not recognize the spiritual efficacy of Roman Catholic baptism, Hodge stood amazed that his Presbyterian brethren could have declared "Calvin, Luther, and all the men of that generation, as well as thousands who with no other than Romish baptism" who had long "been received into the Protestant churches, to have lived and died unbaptized."[61] In viewing the long history of the Christian Church from the time of Christ to his own day, this position against Roman Catholic baptism was incomprehensible to him. In this way, Hodge's concerns over Roman Catholic baptism reflected both his Reformed orthodox commitments and his American

57 Hodge, "Slavery," 302.

58 David Torbett, *Theology and Slavery: Charles Hodge and Horace Bushnell* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2006), 70–71,

59 Hodge, "Slavery," 278. See also David Neil Murchie, "Morality and Social Ethics in the Thought of Charles Hodge" (PhD diss., Drew University, 1980), 294–308.

60 Hodge, "Slavery," 293.

61 Charles Hodge, "General Assembly of 1845," *Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review* 17, no. 3 (July 1845): 444.

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context. As a subsequent chapter will show, he also reshaped classic defenses of this practice.

Hodge spent roughly two-thirds of his customary annual *Repertory* article summarizing the proceedings of each year's General Assembly meeting by questioning the 1845 gathering's vote to invalidate Catholic baptism. Although he used the Bible to help make his case, he mainly relied on various historical precedents to argue against the Assembly's vote. Like many Protestants, Hodge believed that the Catholic Church was "corrupted and overlaid by false and soul-destroying abuses and errors," but he also held that it was still a body of believers that professed the essential elements of true Christianity as laid forth in the Bible.[62] This was a slight modification of standard Reformed orthodox approaches to the subject, which generally treated the Roman Catholic Church as a false church. In the end, Hodge had no doubt that while the Catholics may have perverted certain aspects of the practice of baptism, they still executed the sacrament with the clear "intention of complying with the command of Christ, and of doing what he requires to be done, by those who accept the covenant of grace."[63]

1.6 Sovereignty

While Hodge held dearly to the Westminster Confession's first chapter on the centrality of Scripture as a trustworthy guide for life, he was no less committed to the Westminster Confession's second chapter on the character and omnipotent sovereignty of God.[64] His commitment to God's sovereignty comes across in some of his earliest and most influential writings, many of which were born out of the factionalism over religious revivalism that came to define the Old and New Schools of Presbyterianism.[65] Like many other denominations, Presbyterians were confronted by the reality that thousands were converting to Christianity in the opening decades of the nineteenth century. How was one to explain such widespread revival? New School Presbyterians argued that humans played a key role in choosing salvation, while their Old School brethren held that human nature was so depraved that it was only through God's initiating salvific action that anyone could be drawn to faith in Christ.

62 Hodge, *Life of Charles Hodge*, 340.

63 Hodge, "General Assembly of 1845," 448.

64 *The Westminster Confession of Faith* (Lawrenceville, GA: The Presbyterian Orthodox Church, 2007), 1–12.

65 Key theological differences between the Old and New School are neatly encapsulated in Isaac Van Arsdale Brown, *A Historical Vindication of the Abrogation of the Plan of Union* (Philadelphia, PA: Wm. S. & Alfred Martien, 1855), 288–308.

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