

Abstract

“Am I My Brother’s Keeper?:
Some Roots of the Nineteenth Century Battle Between Evangelical and High Church
Episcopalians”

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Thesis under the direction of Professor Hannah Matis

The Episcopal Church began with a compromise between disparate parties; one that supported the traditional office of bishop and its powers, and one that wanted something entirely new and republican. The compromise led to fifty years of détente. In the middle of the nineteenth century the détente broke down, leading to an internecine war between Evangelical Episcopalians and their High Church brethren. This thesis explores the root causes of that war by examining the rise of Evangelical influence in the United States, the breakdown of that influence, and the effect of that loss on Evangelicals. The social, political, and religious pressures exerted by the loss of influence caused American Evangelicals to launch an anti-Catholic crusade of pamphlets, literature, and political machinations. Evangelical Episcopalians launched a similar crusade, but focused it internally at High Church Episcopalians rather than Roman Catholics. The public nature of that battle defined the antebellum Episcopal Church and has influenced the relationship between high and low church Episcopalians into the present.

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by

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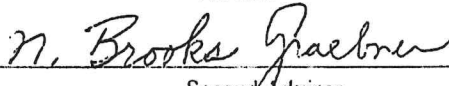
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Introduction

In 1841, evangelical Bishop Charles P. McIlvaine wrote in his Evangelical magnum opus, *Oxford Divinity compared with that of the Romish and Anglican Churches*, that High Church Episcopalians were aiding Rome in her effort to “plant again the standard of the Vatican on the walls of Lambeth.”¹ Such was the relationship between the Evangelical and High Church parties by the mid-nineteenth century. It was an unusual place to find the Episcopal Church less than a century after its founding. The parties had existed within the church, though in different forms, from its inception and had lived in brotherly toleration, if not affection, since the late eighteenth century.

There had always been those of different minds on many subjects among Anglicans in the British colonies that would become the United States. Distance from the mother church and direct episcopal oversight had created a unique kind of Anglican in the colonies. The need for bishops was questioned by some. Others, affected by the First Great Awakening in the mid-eighteenth century, began to define the “church” as quite separate from the institution. Others, naturally, maintained that the tradition of Anglicanism was sacrosanct. Bishops, they felt, were essential.

These two groups found a way to exist together. They came together with the understanding that differing views did not negate their common life. They would stay together despite their differences of opinion, recognizing it as a difference of *opinion*

¹ Charles Petit McIlvaine, *Oxford Divinity compared with that of the Romish and Anglican Churches: with a special view to the illustration of the doctrine of justification by faith, as it was made of primary importance by the reformers; and as it lies at the foundation of all Scriptural views of the gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ* (Philadelphia: Joseph Whetam & Son, 1841), 28.

rather than a difference of kind.

All of that shifted in the nineteenth century. How is it that a church founded on the recognition that those of differing opinions could still practice common prayer had broken down into party lines in less than a century? The answer to that question is the focus of this thesis. In order to find the answer peculiarities of the American religious, political, and social context have been examined. In addition to the relationship of Evangelicals and High Churchmen in the Episcopal Church, the interactions of non-Episcopal Evangelicals with American political and social mores are analyzed. What at first glance appear to be only vaguely related narratives come together in the mid-nineteenth century to explain the circumstances among Evangelical Episcopalians that caused their very public rupture with High Churchmen.

At their very worst, High Church/Evangelical conflicts in the nineteenth century were exacerbated by outside factors. While many have posited the cause as England's Oxford Movement and the *Tracts for the Times*, the great explosion of partisanship can be attributed to a general crisis of confidence in American Evangelicals during the pinnacle of the Second Great Awakening as Evangelical standing waned in the United States. The *Tracts* were simply seen by Evangelical Episcopalians as proof of what they already suspected about their High Church brethren.

Historians of the Episcopal Church have written a great deal about the church in the nineteenth century. In general they have focused on the history of one party or another. Diana Hochstedt Butler wrote the history of Evangelical Episcopalians in her *Standing Against the Whirlwind* (1995). Her argument regarding the outbreak of

hostilities between the Evangelical and High Church parties is rooted entirely in a theological disagreement over the ideas of the Oxford movement. This is certainly true. There was a great gulf between what might be considered “standard” Evangelical theology and that of the Oxford Movement. The Oxford Movement and the *Tracts for the Times* threatened Evangelical Episcopalians in two ways according to Butler. First, it threatened Evangelical theological positions by “articulating a non-Protestant theology.”² Second, the existence of the Oxford Movement and the publication of the *Tracts*, especially in an American version, “confirmed the long-lingering fears of non-Episcopal evangelicals that evangelical religion could never be maintained by the Church of England or its offspring.”³ While Butler’s overall analysis does situate Evangelical Episcopalians in the larger American Evangelical environment, it neglects the larger American Evangelical environment in its consideration of nineteenth century antagonism between the two parties. Rather, the cause is placed entirely upon the Oxford Movement.

Another historian who touches on the controversies of the early nineteenth century Episcopal Church is Allen C. Guelzo. In his *For the Union of Evangelical Christendom: The Irony of the Reformed Episcopalians* (1994), he focuses on the emerging Ritualist movement in England which began around 1839. In order to avoid such a thing happening in the Episcopal Church, Guelzo argues, Evangelical Episcopalians attempted to change the church’s canons and its prayer book to no avail. Their last recourse was Evangelical Episcopalian’s “quasi-republican fellow-feeling for

² Diana Hochstedt Butler, *Standing Against the Whirlwind: Evangelical Episcopalians in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 94.

³ *Ibid.*, 94-95.

other evangelical denominations.”⁴ The camaraderie of Evangelical Episcopalians with other Evangelical denominations would, according to Guelzo, give them a “stick with which to beat” their High Church opponents.⁵ Guelzo’s evaluation of the hostilities between High Church and Evangelical Episcopalians in the nineteenth century focused almost exclusively on the post Civil War years. He mentioned only in passing those events which this thesis takes as its main topics. While he is absolutely correct in his analysis of Evangelical Episcopalians antebellum attempts to thwart High Church interpretations of both church canons and the Book of Common Prayer, the intention of his study is to show the development of the ideas of the Reformed Episcopal Church. *For the Union* does not assess any possible roots of the antebellum hostilities.

Finally, Robert Prichard offered an examination of Charles Petit McIlvaine’s theological argument against the High Church party in *The Nature of Salvation: Theological Consensus in the Episcopal Church, 1801-73* (1997). Prichard also focused exclusively on the theological disagreements between Evangelical Episcopalians and High Churchmen. His, however, is an even more narrow examination than Butler’s. Prichard argued that the hostilities between the two parties were determined by an argument over the nature of baptism and renewal. The ideas of the Oxford Movement were “to be condemned,” in Prichard’s understanding, because they “postulated a moral change in baptism that precluded any need for adult renewal.” This is another excellent example of an analysis of the Evangelical theological position and the complexities of the

⁴ Allen C. Guelzo, *For the Union of Evangelical Christendom: The Irony of the Reformed Episcopalians* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University, 1994), 61.

⁵ Ibid.

shifting theological thought of the mid-nineteenth century. However, Prichard's assessment of the maneuvering of Evangelical bishops in the examination of General Theological Seminary and the presentments of three High Church bishops ignored the underlying Evangelical crisis of confidence caused by internal fractures of the pan-Evangelical movement or the rising anti-Roman Catholicism of the nineteenth century.⁶

The High Church party had very positive, one might say hagiographical, coverage in George E. DeMille's *The Catholic Movement in the American Episcopal Church* (1950). Robert Bruce Mullin analyzed the theological and social thought of the High Church juxtaposed with the sweeping influence of Evangelical theology and thought in *Episcopal Vision, American Reality* (1986). There have also been various treatments of the individual parties in articles in the various Anglican/Episcopal scholarly journals throughout the decades.

These historians made excellent analyses of the theological arguments of Evangelical Episcopalians during the animus of the first half of the nineteenth century. This thesis goes beyond the theological arguments and examines the pan-Evangelical movement and Evangelical Episcopal participation in that movement. Mullin comes closest to this by interrogating High Church thought in the midst of an Evangelical milieu. He did not, however, attempt to find the reason for the eruption of hostilities between Evangelical and High Church Episcopalians in the antebellum era. This thesis brings together the national Evangelical, the Evangelical Episcopal, and the High Church narrative threads to outline some roots of the conflict.

⁶ Robert W. Prichard, *The Nature of Salvation: Theological Consensus in the Episcopal Church, 1801-73*, Studies in Anglican History (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 187-192.

The first chapter provides the backstory. It examines the situation in which Anglicans in the newly independent United States found themselves after the break with England and the mother church. Already differing opinions about the nature of the church and how it should be structured emerged. The chapter highlights the churchmen who had the most influence in the reorganization of American Anglicans into the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States. This is the era of the original compromise. The decades that came after would see the strengthening of party sentiment and a gradual distancing between the parties intensified by the growth of Evangelical Christianity in America.

The Episcopal Church could not avoid the influence of rising Evangelicalism in the United States. This was particularly true among those Episcopalians sympathetic to the growing individualism of the republican ideals of the new country. Chapter two focuses on the growing distance between these Evangelical Episcopalians and those who clung to the ways of the mother church. Most Episcopal clergymen were educated alongside Presbyterians and Congregationalists in their educational institutions, and many were convinced of the Evangelical point of view by their professors and classmates. Such was the case of Alexander Viets Griswold, educated at Princeton among Evangelicals. John Henry Hobart, also educated at Princeton, maintained the old High-churchmanship of Samuel Seabury despite his Evangelical surroundings. The consecration of these two men, opposites in every way, solidified the differing opinions of Evangelicals and High Churchmen into opposing parties. They would gather around themselves like-minded laymen and clergy, leading to an ever-widening gap between many Episcopalians.

In the third chapter, rise of denominationalism and its effects on the American churches is introduced. In particular, the ways in which the leveling caused by the ideas of denominationalism led to cross-denominational cooperation among Evangelicals are defined. Notions of the various denominations as parts of one church downplayed the uniqueness of the various Christian bodies. Evangelicals embraced this idea and found in it divine sanction for cooperation with other evangelical Christians regardless of denomination. This cooperation in national voluntary organizations like the American Tract Society and the American Bible Society, solidified the pan-evangelical work that led to a rise in Evangelical power and influence in the United States. Evangelical Episcopalians, following the rationale of cooperation, would band together with other Evangelicals in this pan-evangelical work, and take the side of non-Episcopal Evangelicals against High Church Episcopalians in public ecclesiological and theological debates.

As Evangelicalism grew and gained influence and power in the United States, the growth also caused cracks in what had appeared to be an impenetrable Evangelical wall. The fourth chapter is concerned with the internal and external forces that weakened the pan-evangelical movement and led to the loss of that power and influence. Internally, the collapse of the 1801 Plan of Union between the Congregational and Presbyterian churches, caused by an internal theological controversy in the Presbyterian Church, caused both denominations to become less involved in the pan-evangelical movement. This led, within five years, to the Congregational church removing itself from the movement, and banning preachers from the pan-evangelical voluntary societies from

their churches. At the same time, Baptists removed themselves from cooperation with other Evangelicals over biblical translation of the word “baptism.” These internal dissensions, among others, weakened the pan-evangelical movement. Externally, political pressures connected to a growing mistrust in elites including, for many, the pastors and leadership of the old Evangelical denominations, led to growing mistrust among some Americans for the institutions and works of the pan-evangelical movement.

As the power and influence of the pan-evangelical movement waned, suspicion and scapegoating took their place. Chapter five examines the ways the dwindling social influence of Evangelicalism affected the powerbrokers of the pan-evangelical movement. Unable to analyze their own failings and the internal dissensions of the movement, they began to suspect an outside force was turning the tide of patriotism and faith in the United States. Catholicism had always been suspect to Americans because of its connection to European monarchies. In the first half of the nineteenth century, however, Evangelicals began to suspect an organized invasion by Roman Catholic immigrants under the direction of the pope. Famous Evangelical preachers began to decry the ways that Catholics would usurp the democratic nature of the nation. This would lead, they claimed, to the eventual undoing of the Protestant soul of America. This led to widespread anti-Catholic publications, riots against Roman Catholic immigrants, and violence against Catholic institutions. This anti-Catholic spirit charged Evangelicals of every denomination and Evangelical Episcopalians were not immune.

As Evangelicals began decrying the treat of Roman Catholic immigration as a slow, steady invasion of the democratic United States by the authoritarian powers the

Revolutionary War had been fought against, many Evangelical Episcopalians joined in warning their parishioners and neighbors of the “threat.” But Evangelical Episcopalians began to fear the threat had already infiltrated their church. Suspicion of High Church Episcopalians as “Romanizers” and “Papists” began to escalate with the accusations of Catholic invasion. The final chapter examines the ways that suspicion and enmity boiled over within the Episcopal church with accusations of Romanism against a seminarian, two investigations of General Theological Seminary as a center of Romanizing influence in the church, and the presentment of three bishops of the High Church party.

These threads of narrative are spread across the first half of the nineteenth century. These different currents in the overall narrative that leads to the outbreak of open hostility between Evangelicals and High churchmen overlap and intertwine throughout the half century. It is necessary to examine each of these individually in order to see their overall influence. In the end, the story of American Evangelicalism’s rise to power and gradual fall, Episcopal involvement with the pan-evangelical movement, the controversies between Episcopal High churchmen and Evangelicals of other denominations, and the escalating animosity between Evangelical and High Church Episcopalians led to the open and public hostilities of the mid-nineteenth century.

Chapter 1: Where it All Began

The Episcopal Church had been founded on a compromise between two different visions of what the church should look like in the newborn United States. Prior to the

outbreak of the American Revolutionary War, Church of England parishes throughout the colonies found themselves in starkly different places. In all the colonies south of Pennsylvania the Church of England was the established church.⁷ In some places, like Georgia, such establishment was unofficial. Georgia had no established church, but Anglicans were the “largest and most influential” denomination in the colony.⁸ Parish buildings in colonies where the church was established sat on public land granted by the colonial legislature, and congregations were supported by a tax on the people.⁹ In the northern colonies Puritanism, Quakerism, and other “dissenting” ideologies had formed the founding principles of the colonies and Church of England parishes were one among many minority religious groups. At the conclusion of the revolution the heterogeneous nature of the socio-economic position of the church throughout the nascent United States would lead to a divergence in opinion about how the now independent Episcopal Church should be structured.

Long before the Bill of Rights and the ratification of the First Amendment in 1791, which enjoins the newly formed United States Congress from passing any law “respecting an establishment of religion,” there were many calling for the disestablishment of religion, particularly in the southern colonies. This left parishes of the previously established church in the southern colonies in a precarious state. Income from

⁷ Robert W. Shoemaker, *The Origin and Meaning of the Name “Protestant Episcopal”* (New York: American Church Publications, 1959), 35.

⁸ Elizabeth B. Cooksey, “Anglican Church,” *New Georgia Encyclopedia*. <https://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/arts-culture/anglican-church/> (accessed August 19, 2024).

⁹ Robert Prichard, *A History of the Episcopal Church* (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 1991), 80.

a taxed population evaporated and there was distinct worry that land granted by colonial legislatures would be repossessed by fledgling states. In 1802, that fear came to fruition in Virginia when the state legislature passed a bill retaking all the church property, except church buildings, that had been purchased with tax funds. Endowments used for educational purposes and the care of the poor were seized as well. Three-quarters of parish buildings in Virginia were abandoned, many were “torn down or seized by other religious bodies, communion vessels and fonts were desecrated or stolen, records destroyed.”¹⁰

The parishes of the middle and northern colonies faced no such fears. Their minority status meant that there was no question about to whom the property belonged; property belonged to the parish and its members as it always had. Thus a divide begins to emerge: those who had cause to worry about the survival of their churches in the south, and those in the middle and northern states who did not.

Enter William Smith, head of the Kent School in Chesterton, Maryland, which he successfully transformed into Washington College with the granting of a charter by the state in 1782.¹¹ Smith recognized the perilous position the church faced in Maryland and convened meetings of clergy and laity beginning in 1780. These meetings were fruitful.

¹⁰ George E. DeMille, *The Catholic Movement in the American Episcopal Church* (Philadelphia: Historical Society of the Episcopal Church, 1950), 3. Reprint, Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2006.

¹¹ Prichard, 82.

First, they chose the name “Protestant Episcopal Church” for the parishes of Maryland.¹² Second, they dealt with the problem of clergy lost during the Revolution. In order to replenish the ranks of the clergy they sent two candidates, Mason Locke Weems and Edward Gantt, Jr., to England for ordination to the priesthood.¹³ Finally, and perhaps most importantly, they called for a state convention of interested parties that would “exercise the authority of the church” in the absence of a bishop.¹⁴

A former student of Smith’s, William White, believed the Maryland scheme had potential for the entirety of the church. In August 1782, White published a pamphlet titled *The Case of the Episcopal Churches in the United States Considered*.¹⁵ The pamphlet suggested that Episcopal churches in other states follow the example of Maryland and form conventions of clergy and laity to bridge the gap until the episcopate could be secured. White called these conventions “general vestries” and proposed that they be given spiritual authority consonant with that of bishops, in particular “that of admitting to the ministry.”¹⁶ He also proposed that presiding clergy and representatives elected from the “general vestries” would be members of annual district meetings and a triennial

¹² Shoemaker is dubious about the name “Protestant Episcopal” emerging from meetings in Maryland in and around 1780. He sites a complete lack of manuscript and newspaper evidence for his doubt. For his complete arguments see *The Origin and Meaning of the Name “Protestant Episcopal,”* pp. 101-110. For our purposes, it is sufficient that later history so often accords Smith and Maryland with credit.

¹³ Prichard, 83.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid., 85.

¹⁶ William White, *The Case of the Episcopal Churches in the United States Considered* (Philadelphia: David C. Claypoole, 1782), 12, <http://anglicanhistory.org/usa/wwwhite/case1782.html> (accessed May 12, 2024).

national convention.

To that end, White and other Episcopalians from New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Delaware agreed during an annual meeting of the Society for Relief of Widows and Orphans of Clergymen in May 1784, to organize meetings in their respective states to elect representatives to attend a joint meeting to be held later the same year.¹⁷

When the proposed meeting took place in October 1784 in New York, elected representatives of the organizing states were joined by those from five more states:

Maryland, Virginia, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut.¹⁸

This first unofficial General Convention was not the unifying force White and the other representatives imagined.¹⁹ The New England representatives withdrew from the convention soon after its start, in order to “pursue separate plans for organization.”²⁰ In truth, those plans were already underway. As early as 1783 there were members of the clergy in Connecticut that were troubled by White’s proposals in *The Case*. While White and his associates were planning their General Convention for October 1784, Connecticut clergymen had already chosen a candidate for the episcopate, Samuel Seabury, and he had set sail for England in June 1783.²¹ These clergymen believed that White’s proposals

¹⁷ Clara O. Loveland, *The Critical Years: The Reconstruction of the Anglican Church in the United States of America: 1780-89* (Greenwich, CT: Seabury Press, 1956), 67-68.

¹⁸ Prichard, 85.

¹⁹ The convention of 1785 is recognized as a General Convention by the General Convention of the Episcopal Church. The *Journal* of the 1785 convention is listed as the first General Convention in the collection of journals. However, as not all Episcopalians were represented at the convention of 1785, I consider it an unofficial convention. See “Journals of General Convention,” <https://www.episcopalarchives.org/governance-documents/journals-of-gc>.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*, 88.

for the Episcopal Church had abandoned certain distinctive elements of the Anglican tradition. In a charge to the clergy of Connecticut given later, in 1786, after his successful consecration at the hands of Scottish non-juror bishops, Seabury expressed the prime sentiments of the clergymen who had chosen him for the office:

The government of the Church by Bishops, we hold to have been established by the Apostles, acting under the commission of Christ, and the direction of the Holy Ghost; and therefore is not to be altered by any power on earth, nor indeed by an angel from heaven. This government they have degraded, by lodging the chief authority in a Convention of clerical and lay Delegates--making their Church Episcopal in its orders, but Presbyterians in its government.²²

White's proposal that a joint committee of clergy and laity would take the place of a bishop, particularly with the authority and power to ordain, did not sit well with New England Episcopalians. Thus, when the New England delegation to that unofficial General Convention of 1783 withdrew in order to "pursue separate plans for organization," they had likely already received word that Seabury had been made a bishop at the hands of Scottish non-juror bishops and no longer felt the need to participate in a plan they suspected might move forward without the office of bishop.

Seabury remained the only bishop of the Episcopal Church for almost three years. In 1786 the British Parliament finally passed legislation allowing for the consecration of three bishops for the former American colonies. In 1787 William White of Pennsylvania and Samuel Provoost of New York sailed to England to receive episcopal consecration. The Episcopal Church now had the three bishops required to consecrate further bishops

²² Samuel Seabury, *Bishop Seabury's Second Charge to the Clergy of His Diocese, Delivered at Derby in the State of Connecticut, On the 22d of September, 1786* (New Haven, CT: Thomas and Samuel Green, 1786), 10-11, <http://anglicanhistory.org/usa/seabury/charge1786.html> (accessed March 21, 2024).

for the American church. The question of bishops seemed to be solved, but the structure of the church had still not been decided.

After the English consecrations of White and Provoost, the Episcopal Church was, essentially, the unhappy union of two separate bodies with differing ideals.²³ The New England church was governed by a clerical synod headed by a bishop with Scottish consecration. In the middle and southern states, the church was overseen by bishops with English lines of consecration and governed by a joint, unicameral convention of clerical and lay delegates. Beyond governing structures, there was distrust on both sides. Middle and southern state Episcopalians looked back on Seabury's Tory history during the war as anti-American. Seabury had served as a chaplain to the British Army, created maps of the American landscape for British generals, and was still receiving a pension from Great Britain.²⁴ New England Episcopalians distrusted the churchmanship of those in the middle and southern states, believing they had abrogated far too much episcopal prerogative to the clergy and laity, while in the middle and southern states Seabury's view of episcopal authority made them wonder whether New England Episcopalians were as committed as they to the republicanism of their new nation.²⁵

In 1786 the middle and southern states met in another convention, presented a *Proposed Book of Common Prayer*, and adopted a constitution for the reorganized American church. The need for a revised prayer book was obvious: the American church

²³ There was, in addition, a brief period wherein the Methodist Episcopal Church was considered (and considering remaining) a part of the Episcopal Church. However, the Methodist Episcopal group separated from Episcopalians after a debate over the episcopacy. A more detailed description of the fissure can be found in Prichard, pp. 90-94.

²⁴ Prichard, 95.

²⁵ Ibid.

could no longer use a liturgy which included prayers for the King of England or require an oath of loyalty to that monarch in its service of ordination. The *Proposed Book*, however, made changes to which New England Episcopalians would never agree. Rather than the traditional use of the Apostles', Nicene, and the Athanasian Creeds, the *Proposed Book* only included the Apostles' Creed, eliminating the clause saying that Christ had "descended into Hell." Moreover, the proposed revision also replaced any use of the word "priest" with "minister," and deleted "regeneration" from the liturgy of baptism.²⁶ No consensus regarding the *Proposed Book* was reached even among middle and southern state Episcopalians. Some felt the revision had gone too far, while others believed it had not gone far enough. Charles Miller, the rector of King's Chapel, Boston believed all references to the Trinity should be removed and petitioned the convention to do so. When his request was denied, Miller and King's Chapel "issued its own book, distanced itself from other Anglicans, and became the first explicitly unitarian church in America."²⁷ The 1786 *Proposed Book* was abandoned. Structurally, the Convention of 1786 followed Bishop White's proposals from *The Case...Considered*. The adopted constitution provided for a unicameral legislative body of both clergy, including bishops, and laity in which votes would be taken by orders.²⁸

A General Convention of the Episcopal Church was called to Philadelphia in 1789. Would the two opposing sides of the Episcopal Church find enough common ground to unite? Providence, it seems, interceded, when illness prevented Provoost from

²⁶ Prichard, 86.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid. 85.

attending the convention. In a letter read publicly to the convention on Thursday, July 30, 1789, Seabury expressed some “misapprehensions concerning an entry in the minutes of a former Convention, as intending some doubt of the validity of his consecration.”²⁹ Provoost, in the convention of 1786, had openly questioned Seabury’s consecration at the hands of Scottish bishops. It was immediately, and without recorded discussion, unanimously resolved that, in the opinion of the convention, the “consecration of the Right Rev. Dr. Seabury to the episcopal office is valid.”³⁰ Convention was adjourned until September 30, so that Bishops White, Provoost, and Seabury could meet in person to discuss the joint consecration of a bishop for Massachusetts and New Hampshire. There was some concern on the parts of White and (possibly) Provoost that joining in consecration with Seabury would arouse some “difficulty or delicacy, in respect to the Archbishop and Bishops of England,” as the participation of the English consecrated White and Provoost with Seabury might, it was feared, lend validity to the Scottish non-jurors, placing the English bishops in a precarious position.³¹ In any event, Seabury and the Connecticut Episcopalians would not join the General Convention until the resolution of some questions regarding the constitution of 1786 were settled.

In Connecticut, and other New England states, the authority of the bishop was central to their understanding of the church. The leveled nature of the unicameral

²⁹ The Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America, *Journal of a Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church, in the States of New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, and South Carolina Held in Christ Church, in the City of Philadelphia, from July 28th to August 8th, 1789* (Austin, TX: Archives of the Episcopal Church, 2022), 51. https://www.episcopalarchives.org/sites/default/files/publications/1789_GC_Journal.pdf (accessed June 22, 2023).

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid., 54.

legislative structure did not reflect that understanding. In September 1789 the Connecticut churchmen wanted to make sure they were not agreeing to a church they would not recognize. In the earlier sessions of the 1789 Convention, convention amended the proposed constitution to create a separate House of Bishops given the power of veto; the House of Deputies, however, could override that veto with a three-fifths vote.³² Still not representative of a strong episcopate for the New England Episcopalians, the convention gave the House of Bishops a weightier power of veto and empowered that body to propose legislation to the General Convention, a right which had not been afforded to the bishops in the previous amendment.³³ These changes were enough to encourage the deputies from Connecticut to take their place in time to examine and approve a new *Book of Common Prayer*.

The new book (1789) eliminated many of the controversial revisions of the 1786 *Proposed Book*. It reinstated the word “regeneration” to the baptismal liturgy, used “priest” interchangeably with “minister,” restored the use of the Nicene Creed alongside the Apostles’ Creed including the “descent into hell” clause. It also included a not-so-subtle nod to Seabury’s Scottish consecration by including an edited version of the Scottish prayer of consecration in the formulary for celebrating the Eucharist.³⁴

Two parties, vehemently opposed to one another in 1786 over matters ecclesiological, theological, and political, had reached a compromise. This did not mean, however, that the sundering of the Episcopal Church into opposing parties had come to an

³² Ibid., 95

³³ Ibid., 96.

³⁴ Ibid.

end. The compromise of 1789 gave neither side all they wanted. The church had officially recognized the role of the episcopacy in Anglicanism. White's proposal to create a more egalitarian model that allowed elected clergy to fulfill the traditional role of bishops in the American church had failed. The church now had bishops and the means of creating more. A House of Bishops had been given weighty powers in General Convention. However, the bishops of that newly created body would not be appointed by the secular powers or have their own extra-ecclesiastical powers. Bishops of the American church would be elected, just as the secular powers.³⁵ New England Episcopalians won on the issue of bishops, but middle and southern states Episcopalians maintained the democratic ideals they feared New England abhorred. The opposing parties reached a cold détente: no public battles, but neither side conceding to the other's existence.

It is difficult to determine whether those who favored a less centralized vision of the church had been influenced by the revivalism of the 1740s, or whether it was anti-Toryism that drove their more democratic dreams for the church. It is certain, however, that American Anglicans had been effected by the First Great Awakening. Laity and clergy alike embraced the revivalist ideals of personal conversion and a vision of the church as an invisible community of the faithful. While "Evangelical" as a descriptive term has carried various meanings since the Reformation, I have used it here to describe those Christians who profess the above tenets and hold that the "cardinal object" of the church is the "propagation of the gospel to every creature."³⁶

³⁵ Butler, 9.

³⁶ Charles Petit McIlvaine, *The Missionary Character and Duty of the Church: A Sermon, Before the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America, at Its Triennial Meeting in St. Stephen's Church, Philadelphia, August 24, 1835* (Philadelphia, PA: Wm. Stanley, 1835), 9-10. <https://ia803104.us.archive.org/21/items/missionarycharac00mcil/missionarycharac00mcil.pdf> (accessed January 7, 2024).

Opposition to Evangelicalism in the Episcopal Church has been described in many ways throughout the history of the church: High Church, Catholic, Anglo-Catholic, Puseyite, etc. Throughout the decades the focus of these groups has been as varied as what they are called. Issues both ecclesiological and theological have come to the fore as points of debate with Evangelical Episcopalians. I use the term “High Church” throughout to ease the discussion, not to conceal the differences. I have chosen to maintain the capitalization of these party descriptions as, by the first quarter of the nineteenth century they had become more like political parties than theological designations. There is a great deal of distance between the bishop-centered power arguments of Samuel Seabury and the theological outlook of the *Tracts for the Times*. However, the question remains whether either deserves to be denominated agents of Satan, propagating the “thorns and thistles” and “rank growths” of the “abominations indigenous to Romanism,” and why such a vehement war against fellow Episcopalians was launched in the first place.³⁷

The death of the détente between the Evangelical and High Church parties could be laid at the feet of the Oxford Movement and the publication of the *Tracts for the Times*. There is, though, much more leading to the explosion of hostilities toward the High Church. Evangelicalism swelled in the early nineteenth century United States. Men and women banded together, regardless of denomination, in an effort to conquer the world for Christ. The democratic ideals of the new nation seemed to support the Evangelical ideas of freedom and personal responsibility. As their power and influence grew the certainty of their mission to make the new nation in the image of the Kingdom

³⁷ McIlvaine, *Oxford Divinity*, 32.

of God drove Evangelicals to view themselves as the moral arbiters of the country.

Politics and culture, however, shifted. Evangelicals as a force fractured and their hold on power began to dissolve.

Unable to see the political, cultural, and theological forces at work in their loss of power, Evangelicals began to suspect the hand of their ancient enemy Rome in their downfall. Anti-Catholic and anti-immigrant attitudes emerged and expanded in the middle years of the nineteenth century. Evangelical Episcopalians were not immune to the anxiety of the times and joined the chorus of voices decrying the Pope's assault on American soil and democracy. Moreover, the war that broke out between the Evangelical and High Church parties in the first half of the nineteenth century was caused by this loss of influence and power in the wider Evangelical experience.

Chapter 2: The Parties Emerge

The reorganization and foundation of the Episcopal Church took place between two major religious events in America. In England a new movement called Evangelicalism was rising through the open air preaching of men like John Wesley, the founder of what would later be called Methodism, and the reforming and pietistic work of groups like the Clapham Sect.³⁸ Following these examples, the preaching of Englishman George Whitefield sparked a revival of religious fervor among Christians throughout the colonies in the mid-eighteenth century. What resulted has been called the First Great

³⁸ Robert Bruce Mullin, *Episcopal Vision/American Reality: High Church Theology and Social Thought in Evangelical America* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1986), 29.

Awakening, centered primarily in New England. Marked by “flamboyant and highly emotional preaching,” what it revived was the centrality of religious ideals familiar to the Puritan founders of those northern colonies.³⁹ The Puritans’ Calvinism had always insisted on religion without formality that lived outside the trappings of sacraments and church orders, on an individual reckoning with sin and God, a personal experiential conversion to Christ, and an interior sense of one’s election to salvation. What the Evangelical revivalism of the First Great Awakening roused was an emotional response to what the Puritans had done quietly. The emotional preaching of the mid-eighteenth century caused a “great increase in the number and intensity of bodily effect of conversion—fainting, weeping, shrieking, etc.”⁴⁰ American Anglican clergy mostly dismissed this Evangelical revival as a fostering of “enthusiasm,” though not all Anglicans were unaffected by the Evangelical movement. Those who found revivalist religion attractive often attended Methodist meetings while maintaining their affiliation with their Anglican parish. Anglicans were not the only churchmen to lament the trappings and enthusiasm of revival. Leaders of the Congregationalist and Presbyterian churches denounced the fervor of the revivals as distractions and encouraged their coreligionists to ignore what could only result in division into “1000 Sects, Sorts, and Divisions, ’til nothing but *Confusion* as a Cloud covered the whole Face of the Land.”⁴¹

The fires of the First Great Awakening did not last long. The central message of

³⁹ Ibid., 286-287.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 287.

⁴¹ Alexander Garden, *Regeneration, and the Testimony of the Spirit. Being the Substance of Two Sermons... Occasioned by Some Erroneous Notions of Certain Men Who Call Themselves Methodists* (Charleston, SC: 1740), cited in Alan Heimert and Perry Miller, *The Great Awakening Documents Illustrating the Crisis and Its Consequences* (Indianapolis, IN: 1967), 61, quoted in Butler, 4.

revivalist preaching that conversion was an instantaneous, unique, and emotional experience did not provide for a returning audience. As those who found salvation through revivalist preaching and emotional experience settled into their sense of assurance, the desire for such preaching waned. Wider issues also took colonial attention. The outbreak of the French and Indian War in 1754 did much to distract the colonies from their own personal religious experience and, as relations with Great Britain began to decline, attention across the colonies naturally turned to political matters.

The late eighteenth century witnessed a new revival of religion that lasted into the early nineteenth century. In New England this revival was found, predominantly, in the Congregationalist and Presbyterian churches served by the students of Jonathan Edwards. These students (and their students) were the founders of what has been called the New Divinity, a systematic reconsideration of the doctrines of Puritan Calvinism.⁴² Unlike the First Great Awakening, in New England the Second was more sedate. One historian of the Second Awakening described that it was “no uncommon thing” to see those who experienced conversion during this period in New England whose main religious concerns “antedecently arose from a sense of their being in the hands of God” (certainly a reference to Edwards’s sermon *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God*) to “unexpectedly...find themselves rejoicing in that very consideration.”⁴³ Despite the joy found in their experience of salvation, the result was a congregation sitting with “deep solemnity depicted in their countenances,” without “tear or sob” witnessed during the

⁴² A full description of New Divinity theologians and the results of their reconsideration of Puritan theology can be found in Ahlstrom, pp. 403-414.

⁴³ Bennet Tyler, *The New England Revivals...from Narratives First Published in the Connecticut Evangelical Magazine* (Boston, 1846), v, quoted in Ahlstrom, 417.

service.⁴⁴

In the western states of Kentucky and Tennessee, however, revivals of the Second Great Awakening produced all the emotional stirring and physical reactions that had been evident in the First Great Awakening. Here, the camp meeting became the center of revivalist preaching. Held outdoors, perhaps emulating the open air preaching of English Evangelicals like John Wesley, it was described as a “religious service of several days’ length.”⁴⁵ The population of these western states were so widely dispersed that attendance at such a camp meeting required long distance travel, meaning that most attendees were “obliged to take shelter on the spot.”⁴⁶ A captive audience meant that preaching and conversions could continue both day and night.

The largest of these camp meetings was held at a small meeting house in Cane Ridge, Kentucky by the Presbyterian preachers James McGready and Barton Warren Stone on August 6, 1801, and attracted a crowd of between ten and twenty-five thousand souls.⁴⁷ This was a very emotional and enthusiastic revival. Stone later wrote a description of all that occurred, cataloguing “bodily agitations or exercises,” including jerking, falling, dancing, barking, laughing, running, and singing exercises.⁴⁸

Evangelical revivalist preaching was once again stirring up enthusiasm. This time, though, many American denominations viewed revival as an opportunity rather than an

⁴⁴ Ahlstrom, 417.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 432.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 432-433.

⁴⁸ “A Short History of the Life of Barton W. Stone Written by Himself,” in *Voices from Cane Ridge*, ed. Rhodes Thompson, facsimile ed. (Saint Louis: Bethany Press, 1954), 69-72, quoted in Ahlstrom, 434-435.

embarrassment. For many denominations the Second Great Awakening was the beginning of a process that stretched over the next century in which organized revival became a tool of expansion, and in some instances the central tool. The wide-reaching effects of the Cane Ridge Revival spread into many churches from its genesis in Kentucky, Tennessee, and southern Ohio. Evangelicals, their theological understanding, thoughts, and practices embedded themselves in American Protestantism, including in the Episcopal Church.

The revivals of the early nineteenth century aligned perfectly with American democratic ideals. The individual was central to democracy: one man, one vote. Individuals could, under the auspices of this grand experiment, change the tide of government and turn the great prow of the nation. Evangelicalism, likewise, favored the place and importance of the individual. The combination of revivalist preaching and enthusiasm for the ideals of democracy made Evangelical Protestantism America's "mainstream religious tradition by the early years of the nineteenth century."⁴⁹

As Evangelicalism became more prominent in American religion nationwide, it also grew in influence within the Episcopal Church. Episcopal leaders who had participated in the compromise of 1789 began to retire and die: Seabury died in 1794 and Provoost stepped away from the responsibilities of his episcopal office in 1801.⁵⁰ Newly arising leaders in the Episcopal Church were men born after the Revolution. They had never experienced the church as the established religion and viewed the Episcopal Church as one among many. Evangelical ideas had also been instilled in many of them as

⁴⁹ Butler, Diana Hochstadt, *Standing Against the Whirlwind: Evangelical Episcopalians in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 10.

⁵⁰ Prichard, 124.

they sought their education in places like the College of New Jersey (now Princeton University) and Yale, founded by Presbyterians and Congregationalists respectively, where Evangelical theological thought flourished. High Churchmen, as the heirs of non-Evangelical Episcopalianism came to be called because of their “high” view of the episcopacy and the sacraments, now found themselves facing off with a growing Evangelical party.

The two parties were solidified in 1811 with the consecrations of two new bishops, John Henry Hobart of New York and Alexander Viets Griswold of the Eastern Diocese (New England minus Connecticut). They exemplified the two parties. Hobart was soon recognized as the leader of the High Church party, and Griswold as the leader of the Evangelicals. As Evangelicalism became more and more the primary mode of American Protestantism, these two parties within the Episcopal Church became contestants for the very identity of the church. The High Church party was characterized by its aloofness from surrounding Evangelicalism, while the Evangelicals were marked by their willingness to work with Evangelical Christians of other churches.⁵¹

John Henry Hobart received his theological education at Princeton, surrounded by Presbyterian professors and classmates. In some students this would have caused a change in ecclesiastical leaning; in Hobart, however, it ignited a desire to defend the principles of the Episcopal Church, particularly the importance of the episcopate.⁵² Hobart turned to William White for direction in things “peculiarly Anglican” in his

⁵¹ Butler, 11.

⁵² Mullin, 12.

theological training.⁵³ There, through a reading list provided by White, Hobart learned “[a]nti-Calvinism based on a fear of fanaticism” concern for the “moral nature of man,” a “distrust of metaphysics,” and a healthy appreciation for “reasoned consent.”⁵⁴ His position as self-declared defender of episcopacy among his Presbyterian schoolmates and what he garnered from White’s reading assignments set Hobart up to become the unrivaled leader of the High Church later in his career.

After ordination at the hands of William White on June 3, 1798, Hobart served two small parishes outside of Philadelphia, and later served Christ Church in New Brunswick, New Jersey, before becoming rector of New York City’s powerful Trinity Church.⁵⁵ Hobart’s defense of the episcopacy during his education remained with him for life. It became, for Hobart, the central mark of the true church; this position brought Hobart into controversy with the Evangelical arm of the church. At first Hobart’s claims of exclusivity for the Episcopal Church caused waves only outside the confines of the church he served; later his point of view would provide fodder for controversy within as well.

In his desire to provide worthwhile works of piety to the Episcopal Church Hobart created a “distinctive style of religious literature” that included an appeal for piety with a vigorous defense of High Church ecclesiology.⁵⁶ Hobart published adaptations of the works of earlier English religious writings as guides to pious meditations for clergy and

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 23.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

laity alike. To that end, in 1803, Hobart published *A Companion for the Altar* and *A Companion for the Festivals and Fasts of the Protestant Episcopal Church*, based on the works of an eighteenth century Bishop of London and English non-juror respectively. His appeal for faith in Christ in these works was founded in the sacraments and ordinances of the church rather than the instantaneous conversion of the Evangelicals. Those sacraments and ordinances required the faithful to have confidence in the ministry of the church and in her ministers. Inevitably, such focus on sacraments and ministry led to questions of where God had vested those blessings. In *Companion for the Altar*, a collection of meditations in preparation for receiving communion, he counseled the reader to ask if they are a member of the church of Christ, sanctified by his spirit, and whether they kept “communion with this church by devout submission to the ministrations of its priesthood in the orders of Bishops, Priests, and Deacons” who derived their authority by “regular transmission through Jesus Christ.”⁵⁷ Hobart very clearly insisted in this work that the true church must be represented by the triune orders of bishop, priest, and deacon. Non-episcopalians took issue with such an assertion.

Notably, the minister of a Dutch Reformed Congregation in Albany, New York, named William Linn began to refute Hobart’s claims in the page of the *Albany Centinal*. Linn was outraged that Hobart, and by extension the High Church party of the Episcopal Church, would claim for themselves the title of the one true church and condemn all

⁵⁷ John Henry Hobart, *A Companion for the Altar: or Week’s Preparation for the Holy Communion*, 2nd ed. (New York: 1809), iv, quoted in Mullin, 31.

other churches in “imperious and insolent language” in the process.⁵⁸ Hobart’s assertion of the centrality of the episcopacy for the nature of the true church of Christ threatened not only the status of the ministers of non-episcopal denominations, but the validity of their sacraments as well.

Alexander Viets Griswold, like Hobart, received his theological education at Princeton. Unlike Hobart, however, Griswold was in agreement with his Presbyterian schoolmates when it came to the essentials of the Christian faith. While he remained an Episcopalian, and would in his later years write a pamphlet in defense of the episcopacy, faith would always be a matter of personal conversion. Ordained in 1795, he began his ministry serving three parishes in Litchfield County, Connecticut, his native state. He was called as rector of St. Michael’s Church in Bristol, Rhode Island in 1804. In a mere seven years he would be elected bishop of the newly formed Eastern Diocese, encompassing the states of Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New Hampshire, and Vermont.⁵⁹ Though not as vocal or strident a defender of the Evangelical position as later Evangelical churchmen, Griswold did write three works considered important in Evangelical Episcopal circles of the nineteenth century: *Discourses on the Most Important Doctrines and Duties of the Christian Religion* (1830), *The Reformation and the Apostolic Office* (1843), and *Remarks on Social Prayer Meetings* (1858). *The Reformation and the Apostolic Office*, in particular, made an Evangelical argument for the existence of the episcopacy without

⁵⁸ William Linn, et. al. *A Collection of Essays on the Subject of Episcopacy* (New York: 1806), 80, quoted in Mullin, 37.

⁵⁹ Details of Griswold’s biography are taken from John Steely Stone, *Memoir of the Life of the Rt. Rev. Alexander Viets Griswold, D.D., Bishop for the Protestant Episcopal Church in the Eastern Diocese* (Philadelphia: 1844), 72ff. <https://archive.org/details/memoiroflifeofrt00ston>, (accessed May 21, 2024).

going as far as Hobart had in its defense.

Griswold, defender of the Evangelical position that the church is defined by faith and personal conversion, disagreed wholeheartedly with Hobart's assertions. He noted that the "exclusive claims" of the High Church party, and those of Hobart in particular, were "abundantly fraught with excluding energy."⁶⁰ There was, according to Griswold, "more *heart*, more *zeal*, and more *ability*" in the Episcopal Church to preach "Church government and Church polity, than in preaching Jesus Christ, and him crucified."⁶¹ In the opinion of Evangelical Episcopalians like Bishop Griswold, asserting the centrality of episcopacy to the nature of the true church, which Griswold considered a "distinctive principle" of the Episcopal Church, showed the High Church "neglect of the essential doctrines of Christ."⁶² Griswold would defend the episcopacy for the Episcopal Church, but would not make it a sign of the true church.

Hobart called on the faithful to encounter the grace of Christ in the sacraments of the church, particularly the Eucharist. *A Companion for the Altar* bore the subtitle: *or Week's Preparation for the Holy Communion*. Piety for Episcopalians was to be focused on preparing oneself for the sacrament on Sunday. The grace of the sacrament depended on the authority to celebrate it that was granted by Christ to the ministers of the church: bishop and priest. Griswold was less concerned about the sacraments of the church than the Evangelical imperative to spread the gospel. "Our savior's command to preach the

⁶⁰ Stone, John Steely, *Memoir of the Life of the Rt. Rev. Alexander Viets Griswold, D.D., Bishop for the Protestant Episcopal Church in the Eastern Diocese* (Philadelphia: 1844), 121, <https://archive.org/details/memoiroflifeofrt00ston> (accessed May 21, 2024).

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

gospel,” he wrote, is not “restricted to those who have Prayer-Books, and will perform the service.”⁶³

By the early nineteenth century the Evangelical and High Church party lines were firmly drawn. Hobartian High Churchmanship was defined by an assurance that the true church of Christ must have as its earthly head a bishop granted the authority of governance by Christ through a succession of bishops reaching all the way back to the apostles themselves. That meant that, for High Church Episcopalians, there was no church outside of the Episcopal Church that could call itself a true church. They agreed with their Evangelical brethren that the Church of Rome, though holding a valid episcopacy, had abandoned the true faith through man-made additions that did not reflect the truths of the gospel. Where they stood on the Orthodox churches was mostly academic, as real life interactions were extremely limited.

Evangelical Episcopalians, on the other hand, did not believe a bishop was absolutely necessary for true faith in Christ, and therefore membership in the mystical body of the church. The church was marked by those converted in their hearts and working for the spread of the gospel over the whole earth. Because they did not see themselves as exclusive holders of the truth and the only true church, Evangelical Episcopalians were able to work closely with other Evangelical Protestants in their efforts to save the country and the world.

As Evangelicals began to work together their influence in the United States began to grow. Organizations concerned first with the education of the populace expanded into

⁶³ Butler, 38-39.

missionary organizations intended to carry the gospel to the benighted settlers of the West. Concern for the moral values of city dwellers and settlers alike drove Evangelicals to publish and to call for legislation in their churches and the country to outlaw things they believed were drawing the minds and hearts of Americans away from God. Activism of all kinds grew from the roots of moral concern. These ventures were mostly successful in the early nineteenth century, and the successes convinced American Evangelicals that they were called to spread both the gospel and their moral prescriptions over the face of the earth. Evangelical cooperation all began with an effort to train clergymen to preach and save the souls of the lost. If the High Church party was characterized by its aloofness from surrounding Evangelicalism, the Evangelicals were marked by their willingness to work with other Evangelicals.⁶⁴

Chapter 3: Evangelical Episcopalians and Other Evangelicals

The rise of Evangelicals in American churches coincided with the birth of a new language about the church. Throughout the colonial period the various groups of Christians who congregated together thought of themselves as the one true church. Those who disagreed with their ecclesiology, position on scripture, theological assertions, or morality were simply sects and cults. Congregationalists, Lutherans, Dutch Reformed, and Baptists had all at their founding seen their movements as a return to the purity of the New Testament church. Failure to recognize that return, and to heartily engage with its tenets, proved that one was outside the true church. As Evangelical thought and practice

⁶⁴ Butler, 11.

made inroads in the various church bodies, those who followed the Evangelical path began to think less and less of their fellow Evangelicals in other churches as outside the pale.

There was the additional impetus, after the birth of the Bill of Rights, that all religions should be equal in the United States. The First Amendment nullified the idea of an established church, so Anglicans in the southern states found themselves as one among many. Even in New England, where the Congregational church had been the *de facto* church of state and society in that region since the coming of the Puritans, the idea of all churches as equal was a novel one. No church could claim supremacy over others, at least publicly, and the different church bodies of the United States had to find a way to coexist.

A new term was coined: denomination, from a Latin verb, *denominare*, which means “to name.”⁶⁵ Instituting this term to denote the various church bodies shifted American understanding of their differences from consideration of the truthfulness of doctrine and teaching and implied a simple difference in naming of the various Christian bodies. Christians were, under this new understanding, the same; some were called Presbyterians, some were called Congregationalist, some were called Episcopalians. The logic of denominationalism ignored the very real differences between the various churches and made all equal.

Denominationalism “imposed itself” on all the churches of America as if it were “irresistible and its scope predestined.”⁶⁶ The idea seized the American consciousness

⁶⁵ P.G.W. Glare, *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, Later Printing Ed., s.v. “denominare.”

⁶⁶ Martin E. Marty, *Righteous Empire: The Protestant Experience in America, Two Centuries of American Life: A Bicentennial History* (New York: The Dial Press, 1970), 69.

with such speed and complete approbation that any church body that did not wish to be “denominated in such neutral sociological terms” would find themselves expelled from the larger national conversation on religious matters.⁶⁷ A veritable smorgasbord of denominations now took the place of membership in the True Church.

Martin Marty described the shift to denominationalism as a different project for two groups of churches. “In colonial America,” he wrote, “there had been a host culture, the established church,” and alongside this host culture were the other churches, what Marty called a “guest culture of dissent, welcome or unwelcome.”⁶⁸ The dissenters were able much more quickly and easily to adapt to the idea of denominations. This gave the newcomers a legitimacy that would have been nearly unattainable under the colonial structure. The long-standing churches, however, found it much harder to adapt. Presbyterians and Episcopalians were forced to recognize the splinter group known as Unitarians as a legitimate church under the strictures of denominationalism. It was a hard pill to swallow.

The church in the early nineteenth century proved Niebuhr’s axiom that, because of denominationalism, churches failed to “transcend the social conditions which fashion them into caste-organizations” and to resist the temptation that made their own “self-preservation and extension the primary object of their endeavor.”⁶⁹ The will to self-preservation among denominations became the driving force behind denominational

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ ⁶⁹ H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Social Sources of Denominationalism* (New York: The World Publishing Company, 1929), 21.

action. When Samuel Provoost opined in the eighteenth century that the Episcopal Church would not survive his generation, such dire prediction likely spurred the compromises of 1789.⁷⁰ Those dedicated to the Anglican tradition and the Episcopal Church newly emerged from the American Revolution could not imagine a world in which their church did not exist. Disparate parties had found compromise and common ground in order to preserve the church.

Various Evangelical denominations existed in the United States. What had once been sturdy barriers between different conceptions of the true church gradually came to be recognized as an efficient method of church governance that did not separate the various Evangelical churches from one another. Change in denominational attitudes among Evangelicals coincided with rising concern for moral wellbeing, and organizations that had begun as denominational pursuits quickly became pan-Evangelical vehicles for the salvation of the American soul. From that goal the voluntary societies were born.

The earliest types of voluntary society was the tract society. These organizations formed to publish and distribute Evangelical literature to the masses. One of the earliest was the New England Tract Society, formed in 1814 by professors from Andover Seminary in Massachusetts, a Congregationalist institution, and local pastors.⁷¹ The early publication of the New England Tract Society were concerned with failing morals brought on by war and the rise of Unitarianism. The executive committee of the society bewailed that good Christian men had too long stood in “criminal supineness” or “silent

⁷⁰ DeMille, 7.

⁷¹ Clifford S. Griffin, *Their Brothers' Keepers: Moral Stewardship in the United States, 1800-1865* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1960), 32.

despondence” while a “flood of licentiousness” destroyed the institutions of Christianity, and while “war with its dire calamities” raged over the Christian world and the “worst passions of men are let loose without restraint.”⁷² It was time for them to act. They raised money among their fellow Congregationalists to fund the writing, publication, and distribution of religious literature throughout Massachusetts. The tracts they published encouraged a religious life of piety, warned Unitarians to repent of their unorthodox ways, demanded respect for the Sabbath, and chastised both drunkards and users of profane language. Within a decade, the society had published 167 pamphlets, distributed tracts in every state, and changed their name to the American Tract Society.⁷³ Financial difficulties forced the New England Congregationalists who began the American Tract Society to merge their efforts with Baptists, Methodists, and other Evangelicals (after negotiations to protect their theological point of view) of the New York Tract Society in 1824 and move their headquarters from Massachusetts to New York.

After the successful merger of the American Tract Society, other enterprising Evangelicals from Massachusetts and New York decided to found another kind of voluntary society, the missionary society. The purpose of such societies was to fund Evangelical preachers to spread the gospel in areas where churches and preachers of the Evangelical message were almost entirely absent. These missionary societies, like the publishing tract societies, depended on the generosity of donations to operate. A partnership between a Congregational missionary society in Massachusetts and a

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid., 33.

Presbyterian missionary society in Connecticut led to a tour of the western territories of the expanding nation by two of their members in 1812-13. Working together to “christianize the heathen in North America,” and to encourage and strengthen knowledge of Christianity in the “new settlements” of the United States, the partnership’s goals became more and more ambitious.⁷⁴ As their ambitions and expenses grew, and as the nation expanded ever farther to the west, the various independent societies came to the conclusion that consolidation into one national society would be the best course. So, in 1826, once again in New York, the American Home Mission Society (AHMS) was born.⁷⁵ The missionaries of the AHMS were known not only as powerful revivalist preachers, but served their various missionary communities as educators and community leaders as well. They reported back regularly to New York on their successes and spread of the gospel among the people, and those reports kept fundraising among the Evangelicals of the East energetic and generous.

Interconnected with the missionary societies were a group of organizations dedicated to the promotion of Christian knowledge and education. The most prominent of these organizations was the Bible society. In what is likely a legendary account, the first Bible Society in England was founded when Evangelical leaders heard the story of a poor Welsh girl who worked long hours to save her money and travelled a great distance to purchase her own copy of the Bible, only to be told when she arrived at the bookseller

⁷⁴ Ahlstrom, 423.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

that no copies were available.⁷⁶ So stunned were these leaders by the story that they immediately began the formation of societies to guarantee free distribution of the Scriptures. The British and Foreign Bible Society was founded in 1804.

The Philadelphia Bible Society, the first of its kind in America, was established in December of 1808 and was quickly followed by the Bible societies in Connecticut, Massachusetts, New York, and New Jersey.⁷⁷ In less than a decade, there were more than a hundred such societies throughout the United States and it became clear to the various independent societies that a national organization was imperative to meet the growing need. In 1816, a meeting of representatives from many local Bible societies resulted in the formation of the national American Bible Society (ABS).⁷⁸

Most High Church Episcopalians ignored the voluntary societies. One who did not, however, was New York Bishop John Henry Hobart. As voluntary societies proliferated around the country, Hobart saw in their inter-denominationalism only danger for the Episcopal Church. While Evangelical Episcopalians were happy to work alongside other Evangelicals for the propagation of the gospel, Hobart wanted to be sure that any missionary activity brought lost souls to the true church. Six months prior to the foundation of the New York Bible Society, in 1809, Hobart saw the handwriting on the wall. Taking the initiative, he established his own Episcopal society, the New York Bible and Common Prayer Book Society. This organization would distribute both copies of the

⁷⁶ Mullin, 52.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid. 52-53.

Bible and the *Book of Common Prayer* together. “What better method,” asked Hobart in an address before the Bible and Prayer Book Society, “can be adopted to disseminate the truths of the Bible, than by dispersing a book which, exhibiting these truths in the affecting language of devotion, impresses them on the heart as well as the understanding?”⁷⁹ Only in and through the liturgy of the Episcopal Church, Hobart implied, could the Bible be truly experienced and understood.

Hobart had fired the first volley at the voluntary and interdenominational American Bible Society with the formation of his New York Bible and Common Prayer Book Society. Would the Episcopal Church find some way to compete with Evangelicals on the religious stage of democratic America? One of the key areas of Evangelical growth were the voluntary mission societies. Evangelical Episcopalians pressed for the Episcopal Church to enter the ever-growing field of mission work. Their dream was finally realized in 1821 with the organization of the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society (DFMS).⁸⁰ Like the Church Missionary Society founded by Anglican Evangelicals in England, the DFMS was organized as a voluntary society and solicited memberships from the wider Episcopal Church. At first, subscriptions were so numerous that the DFMS had to nullify a provision that any member who qualified as a “patron” would be given a seat on the board of directors because there were too many “patrons” to accommodate.⁸¹ These initial enthusiastic memberships were likely the result of

⁷⁹ John Henry Hobart, “Address Before the New York Bible and Common Prayer Book Society” (1809), quoted in Mullin, 54.

⁸⁰ Butler, 76.

⁸¹ Ibid.

Evangelical members of the church who had anxiously awaited a foray into the world of missions. Outside of the Evangelicals, however, support was not forthcoming. By 1830 the church in the west was desperate for missionaries and mission fields in foreign countries were opening up, but there were few volunteers among Episcopal clergy and even less money to support such missionary work. It was clear that the Episcopal Church was not positioned to support a voluntary missionary society in the same way as Presbyterians and Congregationalists.

In the interim, two new bishops had been consecrated at St. Paul's Church in New York City. On October 31, 1832 the Revs. George Washington Doane and Charles Petit McIlvaine were consecrated to serve the dioceses of New Jersey and Ohio respectively.⁸² Two other bishops were consecrated that day as well, the Rev. Benjamin B. Smith for Kentucky and John Henry Hopkins for Vermont, but it was McIlvaine and Doane who would take up posts as standard bearers for the Evangelical and High Church parties in the years to come. Made bishops side-by-side, they would become bitter rivals in the years of their episcopates. First, though, they would work together to remodel the way the Episcopal Church thought about missions.

In 1835 the board of directors of the DFMS, now including both Doane and McIlvaine, took up the issue of how to correct the problems faced by their voluntary missionary society. McIlvaine was invited to preach the opening sermon of the meeting. His sermon was titled "The Missionary Character and Duty of the Church." McIlvaine preached, in typical Evangelical style, that as the church is the light of Christ in the world

⁸² Editorial, *The Evening Post* (New York), November 1, 1832.

it was God's intention that the church should be the one to bring light, to evangelize the world. It was, he insisted, the duty of the church to

set up the banner of the Lord of Hosts on the highest and broadest ground of missionary duty and privilege, and summon the churches to sustain it; it is to excite and call out the missionary spirit, by taking up such positions of bold confidence in God, and zeal for his gospel—by commencing such enterprises of zeal and responsibility as will make the ministry and the people realize that they have all much to do, and that great efforts of love and zeal are required of all.⁸³

McIlvaine's call for the responsibility of missions to be the responsibility of all members of the church, not just those who volunteered to participate, resonated with his fellow members of the board. He eschewed the voluntary societies of both his fellow non-episcopalian Evangelicals and the Evangelicals of the Church of England, instead expressing a "particular, denominational, obligatory model for mission work."⁸⁴ They appointed seven of their number to recommend a way in which McIlvaine's vision could become reality. The committee was headed by Bishops Doane and McIlvaine. In the end they recommended to General Convention that the Episcopal Church undertake future missionary work "in her character as the Church, and as the 'Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society of the Protestant Episcopal Church.'⁸⁵ The General Convention of 1835, held also in Philadelphia, approved the recommendations of the board: the Episcopal Church would have no separate missionary society, the entire church was now a missionary association.

⁸³ McIlvaine, *Missionary Character*, 25.

⁸⁴ Butler, 77.

⁸⁵ S.D. Denison, *A History of the Foreign Missionary Work of the Protestant Episcopal Church*, 2 vols. (New York: 1821), I:250, quoted in Butler, 77.

There were still question of how the missionary field would be worked. With two opposing parties, High Church and Evangelical, there was some concern about how missions, both foreign and domestic, would be divided among them. Would they contend for sections of the country, leaving discernible patches of High Church and Evangelical ground scattered across the West? How would they decide if a High Church or Evangelical missionary should be sent to China or Africa? What mechanism would eliminate the possibility of missions becoming a battle ground between the two parties? Doane and McIlvaine came to an arrangement: the fields of missionary work would be divided between the two parties. In order to secure McIlvaine's vision of the church as mission society all future domestic missions would be given to the High Church party and all foreign work to the Evangelicals. In 1835, it seemed like a reasonable compromise to forestall an internecine war over expansion; it was a decision that would haunt the Evangelicals for a quarter century.⁸⁶

The Episcopal Church had decided that missions, at least, would be a work of the church itself. On other Evangelical concerns, however, Evangelical Episcopalians were more than happy to partner with other Evangelicals. A shared millennialism, the belief that Christ will reign on earth for a thousand years, turned Evangelical minds to the glories of the Kingdom of God. The revivalism of early Evangelicalism in the United States had been concerned with the salvation of the individual; as Evangelical influence grew and interdenominational work progressed, the voluntary societies were an instrument of communal salvation. Organizations like the American Bible Society and the

⁸⁶ Butler, 142.

American Tract Society saw themselves as members of the invisible church banding together to make visible the “peace and unity that awaited the world in the millennium.”⁸⁷

Evangelical Episcopalians agreed with their Evangelical brethren in their millennial beliefs. Nineteenth century Evangelicals were convinced, through their interpretation of biblical prophecies, that the approaching return of Christ would include a thousand-year span of earthly peace. Premillennialists believed that the second coming of Christ would be followed by a thousand year period of peace and happiness, while postmillennialists proclaimed that the present age would evolve into a society of peace and righteousness, after which Christ would return to establish a new heaven and a new earth. These competing “millennialisms” made little difference to Evangelical Episcopalians; the truth of the coming millennium was the important fact. The society of the faithful, the terrestrial kingdom of God, heretofore invisible on the face of the earth, would become visible; the mystical body of the church, hidden throughout the denominations and nations of the world, would finally be at the center of history. In the millennium the church would live free of sin and join Christ in “triumph over the evil of the world and Satan.”⁸⁸

Evangelical Episcopalians like Benjamin Allen, rector of St. Paul’s Episcopal Church in Philadelphia, became well-known for their preaching and writing about the

⁸⁷ Butler, 45.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

coming millennium.⁸⁹ During the 1820s Allen taught a women's Bible class with the purpose of imparting to Episcopal women knowledge of human history with a "connexion with the prophecies of Scripture," and later proclaimed that the world was less than forty years from the millennium.⁹⁰ Allen was not alone among Episcopalians in proclaiming the millennium and was close friends with Charles McIlvaine, Stephen Tyng, and William Meade — all leaders in the Episcopal Church of an Evangelical persuasion.⁹¹

In the Evangelical and millennial view, if the revival was a tool to be used for the salvation of individuals, then the voluntary society was a tool for the salvation of the whole of society. The revival drew the individual to an experience of conversion and the voluntary societies spread the good news of the kingdom of God. The societies were a foretaste of the millennium in which the faithful came together in cooperation to battle sin and Satan. They were, in some small way, social islands of the coming kingdom, an example of what the world would be, and Evangelical Episcopalians "participated wholeheartedly in this effort to bring about millennial glory in the world."⁹²

The voluntary societies brought with them a measure of moral paternalism, which infiltrated the Episcopal Church not least through a General Convention resolution against the theater. Theater was becoming a popular mode of entertainment, and was considered by many Christian moralists of the time to be an "exciter of passions" and a

⁸⁹ Butler, 44.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid., 45.

“promoter of vice.”⁹³ Alcohol consumption was also on the rise, and dueling became a way to settle even the slightest of disputes between “gentlemen.” Evangelical Episcopalians, like Francis Scott Key, began to speak out about the moral turpitude of the country. In 1817 he submitted a resolution to the General Convention that they make a statement opposing “vain amusements of the world, frequent horse races, theaters, and public balls, playing cards, or...any other kind of gaming” and “inconsistent with Christian sobriety, dangerous to the moral of the members of the Church, and particularly unbecoming of the character of communicants.”⁹⁴ At the same General Convention, the House of Bishops sent a message five days later on the subject to be read to the House of Deputies. In it, the bishops, “solicitous for the preservation of the purity of the church, and the piety of its members” encouraged the clergy of their duty with a “discrete but earnest zeal” to warn the people of their parishes of the danger of

indulgence in those worldly pleasures which may tend to withdraw the affections from spiritual things. And especially on the subject of gaming, of amusements involving cruelty to the brute creation, and of theatrical representation, to which some peculiar circumstances have called their attention, -they do not hesitate to express their unanimous opinion, that these amusements, as well from their licentious tendency, as from the strong temptations to vice which they afford, ought not to be frequented. And the bishops cannot refrain from expressing their deep regret at the information that in some of our large cities, so little respect is paid to the feelings of the members of the church, that theatrical representations are

⁹³ Prichard, 106.

⁹⁴ The Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America, *Journal of the Proceedings of the Bishops, Clergy, and Laity of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America in a General Convention, Held in Trinity Church, in the City of New York from the 20th to the 27th day of May inclusive, A.D. 1817, 2nd Ed.* (Philadelphia: S. Potter & Co., 1820), 12, https://www.episcopalarchives.org/sites/default/files/publications/1817_GC_Journal.pdf (accessed September 12, 2023).

fixed for the evenings of her most solemn festivals.⁹⁵

Key's resolution was tabled, and the exhortation to the clergy by the House of Bishops was only read at the Convention. Evangelical Episcopalians could not ignore the moral failings they saw all around them, so they turned to other Evangelicals to fight the good fight.

Real Evangelical power in the United States operated in and through voluntary societies. What began as a pan-Evangelical effort to spread the gospel locally and westward, as well as shift the moral compass of the nation, very soon became political. The republican form of government, granted by God to the less-than-a-century old nation, in order to avoid both the "unappetizing patriarchal politics of monarchy" and rampant individualism, championed the notion of national virtue.⁹⁶ The united Evangelicals of the United States would provide that virtue. And, because they had been given this divine vocation to save the soul of America, to make it a living embodiment of Jesus' city on a hill (Matt. 5:14), America itself was (as the Puritans had claimed) a work of God. Its freedoms, form of government, and the growing influence of Evangelicalism were all part of God's plan to spread the gospel to the world.

In order for God's plan to be fruitful Evangelicals must band together. If the city on the hill were to shine, then Americans must be shining examples of morality and piety. The Evangelical message must be unified across the country and America must proclaim it loudly. Missions to the west and the spread of Evangelical tracts and Bibles across the

⁹⁵ Ibid., 47.

⁹⁶ Guelzo, 46.

nation appeared to be successful for the pan-Evangelical movement. Then just as the middle of the nineteenth century approached America shifted both politically and socially, and the power and influence of Evangelicalism began to wane.

Chapter 4: Cracks in the Evangelical Wall

The second quarter of the nineteenth century witnessed the swelling influence of Evangelicals across the United States, with the cooperation of Evangelical Episcopalians and the proliferation of voluntary societies. The seemingly impenetrable wall of Evangelical influence, however, soon began to show cracks. As the ideals of Jacksonian Democracy began to infiltrate the nation, the Evangelical empire began to look much like the old rule of the elite in pre-revolution America. Also, the foundations of some of the established Evangelical denominations began to shudder. Presbyterians suffered a schism, the Presbyterian and Congregational denominations abandoned a decades-long plan to become one, the inheritors of the Cane Ridge Revival gained influence, the walls between Evangelical denominations that many imagined demolished began, once again, to be raised, and rising moral stewardship movements began to divide the pan-Evangelical movement in the United States.

The fathers of the American Revolution had thrown off the evils of aristocracy, but not of elitism. Political power was held, in the early nineteenth century, by a cadre of wealthy, land-owning men. As Andrew Jackson came to power in the 1828 presidential

election, political power was shifting. The 1810s and 20s witnessed a number of “dramatic political battles” in state constitutional conventions over the issues of property ownership and suffrage.⁹⁷ To many Americans suffrage contingent upon property ownership was reminiscent of the aristocratic power they had struggled against in the late war. An ideology defined by the argument for universal white suffrage, along with other ideas like manifest destiny, came to be known quite early as Jacksonian Democracy.

This new “egalitarian brand of American republicanism” led many to question the old hierarchies of the Evangelical churches.⁹⁸ Though the democratic principle of equality had been one of the cornerstones of the Evangelical movement, placing the individual at the center of the religious life and asserting the conversion of the individual as the ground of Christian faith, the churches themselves were still dominated by a powerful and well-off, if not wealthy, class. This was even more true in the Episcopal Church where the unquestioned leaders, even in Evangelical circles, were the bishops. These were highly educated men who came, primarily, from well-to-do families. The spread of Jacksonian Democratic ideals led to the questioning of long-standing realities.

Evangelical bishops of the Episcopal Church had strongly defended the episcopate. Bishop Griswold had preached the centrality of the threefold office of bishops, presbyters, and deacons in an ordination sermon. In that sermon he asserted episcopal government of the church, given full warrant of scripture, was “from all ancient

⁹⁷ Stanley L. Engerman and Kenneth L. Sokoloff, “The Evolution of Suffrage Institutions in the New World,” *The Journal of Economic History* 65, no. 4 (December 2005), 41, <https://www.cambridge.org/core/services/aop-cambridge-core/content/view/S0022050705000343> (accessed July 7, 2023).

⁹⁸ Guelzo, 44.

history” the form which “God has set in his Church.”⁹⁹ In the 1830s, Bishop McIlvaine preached in a sermon for the consecration of Leonidas Polk, recently elected bishop of Louisiana, that the “supreme authority” of the apostles had been passed down “by the hand of the Lord” to the bishops of the church.¹⁰⁰ Other Evangelicals were no less protective of the authority and power of the clergy and the place of laity in the overall understanding of the church.

The second report of the American Sunday-School Union, published in 1826, contained a sermon by an unnamed preacher who contended that Sunday schools taught the Christian community, presumably from the time of their childhoods, a mode of “mutual cooperation, between ministers and private Christians” to develop a “disciplined army” where everyone “knows his place.”¹⁰¹ At the time of publication the American Sunday-School Union was in the process of requesting a charter from the state legislature of Pennsylvania. Sentiments like the ones above led to the publication of a broadside accusing the American Sunday-School Union of participating in an attempt to subvert the power of populace. The American Sunday-School Union, it claimed, was part of “one grand system” which had “spread from Maine to Mexico and from the Atlantic to the Western Wilderness,” the main objective of which was to “subject the consciences and

⁹⁹ Alexander Viets Griswold, “On the Apostolic Office,” quoted in Butler, 78.

¹⁰⁰ Charles Petit McIlvaine, *The Apostolical Commission: The Sermon at the Consecration of the Right Reverend Leonidas Polk, D.D., Missionary Bishop for Arkansas; in Christ Church, Cincinnati, December 9, 1838*, 4, (Gambier, OH: G.W. Myers: Western Church Press, 1838), <https://archive.org/details/apostolicalcommi00mcil/page/n1/mode/2up> (accessed February 12, 2024).

¹⁰¹ Charles I. Foster, *An Errand of Mercy: The Evangelical United Front 1790-1837* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1960), 232.

persons of the *free citizens of these United States* to the tyranny of an ecclesiastical domination.”¹⁰² Not only were the people of the United States afraid of the rule of an elite, they feared the unchecked rule of the Evangelical church.

Popular opinion began to turn against the tide of Evangelical influence. The American Sunday-School Union did not receive its charter from the State of Pennsylvania. Public outcry against the Evangelical organization had convinced politicians to withhold support. The Union would eventually gain the charter nearly two decades later in 1845, but by then the damage was done to Evangelical influence across the country. Evangelicals might have suffered with the rise of Jacksonian Democracy, but they must have believed that the authority they held through the pan-Evangelical cooperation would maintain their influence. Theological infighting, as well as the rise of new church bodies, would further weaken the pan-Evangelical hold on power.

In the early nineteenth century the two great Reformed denominations recognized the need for cooperation in western missionary work. Presbyterians and Congregationalists created the Plan of Union of 1801, led primarily by the Presbyterian-educated Congregational minister Jonathan Edwards, Jr. In this plan the two churches agreed to combine their efforts “for the winning of the great western missionary field.”¹⁰³ To that end they would recognize one another’s ministry and polity, and allow for the combining of newly established congregations in the west with a minister of either denomination as its leader. If the newly formed congregation preferred Presbyterian

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ahlstrom, 456.

polity, it was free to choose that mode of governance even if the minister were a Congregationalist, and vice versa. These congregations were also free to join established presbyteries or Congregational associations. It seemed the cooperation of these two denominations would only strengthen the Evangelical movement. Questions, however, soon arose about the wisdom of such a union, particularly from Presbyterian ministers.

With the foundation of Auburn Seminary in western New York in 1821, a rivalry was set up with the crown of Presbyterian theological education: Princeton.¹⁰⁴ Auburn Seminary catered to Plan of Union churches founded in the west and drew a majority of its students from the Congregational stronghold of New England. Presbyterians who came to be called the “Old School,” particularly the professors and students of Princeton, came to question whether such a union with Congregationalists as represented by the new Auburn Seminary might draw their beloved Presbyterian church away from the orthodox Calvinism of the Westminster Confession which they so cherished. There were already those who were moving away from that cherished orthodoxy.

Charles Grandison Finney was a lawyer who experienced a “soul-shaking conversion” in 1821.¹⁰⁵ Led by the spirit of his newfound faith to revivalist preaching, Finney was licensed “somewhat reluctantly” by the local Saint Lawrence Presbytery of New York.¹⁰⁶ He was quite successful in his preaching and became a star of the revivals of the Second Great Awakening. It was Finney who instituted the “anxious bench” to set

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 463.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 460.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

apart those who were on the verge of conversion and make them the “object of special exhortation and prayer.”¹⁰⁷ He held meetings that lasted for a week or more and allowed women to testify to their faith in public meetings. He also began to stray from the strict standards of the Westminster Confession. In Finney’s theology sin was a voluntary act and could be avoided; therefore holiness was also an act of the human will and the orthodox Calvinist doctrines of predestination were ignored.

The influence of Congregational polity and the doctrinal experiments of men like Finney influenced a new generation of Presbyterian ministers and laymen alike. This “New School” was willing to give up or improve the Presbyterian form of church government if it meant more reach and influence for the gospel. They saw the Congregationalists as “fellow champions of evangelical Christianity” and the interdenominational voluntary societies as “mighty evangelistic instruments,” while “improvements” to Calvinist doctrine could only help spread the gospel in the uneducated and unsophisticated West.¹⁰⁸

To the Old School men, however, the structure of the church was not a mere administrative convenience, but an article of faith. To them the Plan of Union undermined the “Reformed tenet that matters of church order were within the divine law (*jus divinum*)” and the “motley congeries” that had developed in the West due to the overlapping of Congregational and Presbyterian polities were not just confusion of that

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 465-466.

divine plan, but a “monstrous deformation” of God’s provision for the church on earth.¹⁰⁹ They also saw in the likes of Finney, Samuel Hopkins, and Nathaniel William Taylor, all New School theologians and “improvers,” the loss of Calvinist orthodoxy and the doctrinal downfall of Presbyterianism.

Voluntary societies were also suspect, especially the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions and the American Home Missionary Society, because they were intimately connected to New England and the new theology that came out of Auburn Seminary.¹¹⁰ These voluntary societies, the influence of Congregationalism, and the Plan of Union were, to the men of the Old School, an “open gate” through which “alien ideas and practices” were allowed to enter the Presbyterian church.¹¹¹ The only answer to the problem was to extricate the church from these corrupting organizations and make mission work the responsibility of the orthodox alone. They would need to excise New School ministers and theologians as well. Those aims would lead to a break in the Presbyterian church and the weakening of the pan-Evangelical movement in America.

The Old School Presbyterians attempted to purge their church of New School ministers and preachers by accusing them of heresy. In all the cases of the early nineteenth century such men were acquitted of those charges. The New School influence was too strong in most synods and in the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 464.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 465.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

When New School Presbyterians joined with Congregationalists in the foundation of Union Theological Seminary in New York, an institution “independent of all church control,” it served to consolidate members of the Old School into a hardened phalanx against them.¹¹² As a direct result the General Assembly of 1837 was solidly in Old School hands. It nullified the Plan of Union of 1801 and, to strike the blow even harder, made the nullification retroactive, essentially cutting off all of the presbyteries founded in the west since the beginning of the century. All at once “553 churches, 509 ministers and between sixty and a hundred thousand members” were eliminated from membership in the General Assembly and the Presbyterian Church.¹¹³ This General Assembly also ended all connections with the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions and the American Home Missionary Society and warned them both not to “encroach on Presbyterian work.”¹¹⁴

New School men immediately rallied their forces to protect the pan-Evangelical work of the societies and those New School presbyteries, congregations, and ministers who had been unceremoniously ejected. They published the “Auburn Declaration” as a “disavowal of imputed error” in answer to the Old School accusation of heresy.¹¹⁵ They hoped to have the opportunity to argue their case at the General Assembly of 1838.

However, the Old School held absolute control of the General Assembly and refused to

¹¹² Ibid., 467.

¹¹³ Ibid.468.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Philip Schaff, *Creeds of Christendom, Vol. III* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1977), “Christian Classics Ethereal,” under “The Auburn Declaration. A.D. 1837,” <https://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/creeds3.v.iii.iii.html> (accessed November 12, 2023).

allow the New School seats at that gathering. The Rev. Nathaniel Beman took charge of the New School representatives and led them to organize separately. Beman argued that the New School assembly was the “legal continuation of the General Assembly.”¹¹⁶ Much litigation, both civil and ecclesiastical, attempted to heal the breach over the next several years to no avail. The General Assembly of 1838 was the essential separation of the Presbyterian church into Old and New School congregations for many years to come, with the New School taking “four-ninths” of the congregations in the division.¹¹⁷

Schism in the Presbyterian church in the late 1830s didn’t just weaken Presbyterianism. The division left the joint Evangelical work of the Presbyterian and Congregational churches in the west unsupported and in chaos. Also, the voluntary societies lost the support of one of America’s oldest and most prestigious Evangelical churches. The New School certainly maintained their support, though at a far lower level considering the difficulties of reorganization. The pan-Evangelical mission was weakened by the removal of half of Presbyterian support and the very public fracture would have been a public relations blow for the two divided churches and the Evangelical movement as a whole. The fall of the Plan of Union would have been a blow to the very idea of Evangelical cooperation and a sign of what was to come.

Another crack in the wall of Evangelical power and influence had begun in 1801. The Cane Ridge Revival of 1801 had driven many of the newly converted to the Evangelical churches. Membership in the Presbyterian, Congregationalist, Baptist, and

¹¹⁶ Ahlstrom, 468.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

Methodist churches in the West had swelled because of the influence of Cane Ridge. Some members remained with Barton Stone, one of the organizers of the Cane Ridge Revival in 1801, and formed the Springfield Presbytery in an attempt to remain in the fold of the Presbyterian church. By June 1804 they had become so “explicitly and violently critical of historic Presbyterianism” that they removed entirely from the Presbyterian church.¹¹⁸ They decided to call themselves “Christian” and abandoned the polity and doctrines of any denomination and took the Bible as their “only creed and law.”¹¹⁹ This small reform movement within the Evangelical world would appear to be unimportant, but within thirty years it would claim more of the membership and power of the pan-Evangelical movement.

The “Campbellites,” another reform movement sprung from the well of Presbyterianism, followed the teachings of Thomas and Alexander Campbell. Thomas Campbell was a Scots-Irish minister of the Secession branch of the Presbyterian church. When he immigrated to America in 1807 he registered with the local Pennsylvania presbytery, but was soon censured for “laxity in admitting people to the Lord’s Supper.”¹²⁰ He withdrew from the Presbyterian church and began his own non-denominational ministry with the purpose of promoting “Christian unity” by preaching a simple gospel unaffiliated with the doctrines of the churches that would “rise above denominationalism.”¹²¹

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 445-446.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 446.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 447.

¹²¹ Ibid.

Alexander Campbell, Thomas's son, attempted to turn the Campbellite "Christian Association" into a more recognizable denomination when he arrived in 1809. Alexander compiled a catechism and founded a periodical to "point out the 'errors' of the existing churches."¹²² With Alexander as the leader this non-denominational reform group attempted to join the Redstone Baptist Association in 1813, but the "uneasy affiliation" would only last until 1827.¹²³ Both Stone's "Christians" and Campbell's movements, who came to call themselves "Disciples," were attempting to restore the primitive church of the New Testament and denominational restrictions hampered that goal. It was soon obvious that the two organizations, Stone's "Christians" and Campbell's "Association," were similar enough that a merger was necessary and was officially accomplished in 1832.

The vast majority of these congregations were in the western territories of the United States. Kentucky, Ohio, and Tennessee all witnessed the expansion of the Christian and Disciples churches. The merger began to draw more converts and likely drew some away from the old Evangelical denominations. Thus the numerical and financial power of the Presbyterian, Congregational, Methodist, and Baptist movements were curtailed in the West. As these cornerstone denominations of the Evangelical movement lost prestige, money, and power the movement became weaker throughout the country. This loss was coupled with the beginnings of separation and a newfound appreciation for denominational distinctiveness among old guard Evangelicals that

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Ibid.

expanded the cracks in the once seemingly indestructible wall of Evangelical power and influence.

In the early years of the nineteenth century the pan-Evangelical movement was committed to the voluntary societies, particularly those dedicated to teaching and publishing. By the early 1830s, however, anxieties over denominational and theological peculiarities saw a number of Evangelical denominations withdraw their support from interdenominational work. The successes of the revival eras had seen numbers in the Evangelical churches explode, and increased membership, money, and influence led the churches to believe they could stand on their own. The combination of security and an augmented sense of what made each church unique led to defections from pan-Evangelical work by some of the largest denominations. There were also class distinctions which led to inter-Evangelical strife. Baptists and Methodists, denominations that predominantly served the poor and working classes, felt slighted by the denominations populated by the affluent. All of these factors led to a Methodist and Baptist revolt against the pan-Evangelical voluntary societies.

Methodists made an attempt to garner support for the Methodist Book Concern and its Methodist Sunday School Union over the interdenominational American Sunday-School Union in the second quarter of the century. Fearing “combinations” that “threatened...to swallow up” denominational publishing works, the Book Concern asked Methodists to pledge \$100,000 to help it compete against the pan-Evangelical publishing societies like the American Sunday-School Union.¹²⁴ Much of the fight was precipitated

¹²⁴ Foster, 237-238.

when the Young Men’s Bible Society of New York, an auxiliary of the American Bible Society, refused to furnish free bibles to the Methodist Sunday School Union with the argument that the Methodist Union was “sectarian.”¹²⁵ Rival societies proliferated: the Methodist Sunday School Union versus the American Sunday-School Union, a Young Men’s Bible Society of New York (auxiliary to the Bible Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church) versus the Young Men’s Bible Society of New York (auxiliary to the American Bible Society).

Ultimately the Methodist attempt to separate from the pan-Evangelical societies was unsuccessful. The influence and fame of the established societies were too strong. Of the expected \$100,000 in donations requested of faithful Methodists, only \$40,000 was ever raised, and that took thirteen years.¹²⁶ But if the Methodist dissenters to pan-Evangelical work were unsuccessful, their battle with the American Sunday-School Union laid the groundwork for dissenters in other denominations. Baptists, in particular, felt aggrieved by the older Evangelical churches in the early 1900’s and, because of their revival fueled growth, felt the need to separate themselves from them on both socio-economic and theological grounds.

In 1815, Presbyterian minister Lyman Beecher had called for a more concerted effort to evangelize the west. In his speech titled *On the Importance of Assisting Young Men of Piety and Talents in Obtaining an Education for the Gospel Ministry*, Beecher lauded what he called a “more homogeneous character” to bind the eastern and western

¹²⁵ Ibid., 235.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 239.

portions of the United States together.¹²⁷ That could only be brought about, he said, by “habits and institutions of homogeneous influence” and would produce a “sameness of views, and feelings and interests” in missionary ministers.¹²⁸ Such homogeneity, Beecher insisted, could only be provided by an educated ministry, something Baptists neither had nor wanted.

In 1828, a Baptist minister’s subscription to the Methodist Book Concern was accompanied by a note praising the Book Concern for standing against “some to represent all parts of the country as in almost heathenish darkness, unless some of THEIR *competent minsters* are there,” a clear statement of class antagonism.¹²⁹ Feelings against the Presbyterians, Congregationalists, and Evangelical Episcopalians were souring among Baptists despite their shared Evangelicalism. Antagonism led to resentment, and resentment would lead to a war, first over economics, then over theology.

Baptist disaffection with pan-Evangelical work began with a battle over pricing. The Baptist General Tract Society, founded in 1824, was a modest competitor with the American Tract Society. Though the Baptist Society was considered “sectarian” by the interdenominational American Society, the relationship between the two was cordial. In 1830 the American Society reduced its list prices from one cent per ten pages to one cent for each fifteen pages.¹³⁰ Denominational societies, including the Baptists, certainly

¹²⁷ Lyman Beecher, *On the Importance of Assisting Young Men of Piety and Talents in Obtaining an Education for the Gospel Ministry*, 2nd. ed., (Andover, MA, 1816), 16, quoted in Foster, 223-224.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹ Foster, 239, emphasis in original.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 242.

viewed this as an attempt by the American Tract Society to put them out of business or absorb them as they had with other “sectarian” organizations.¹³¹ The Baptists refused to give up, and rather than shutting down the Baptist Tract Society they founded a Baptist Home Missionary Society to provide Baptist missionaries to the west.¹³²

The moment of real separation from the pan-Evangelical movement came with a disagreement over biblical translation. Baptist identity, despite the divisions in the Baptist world, centered on believer’s baptism by immersion. In the early 1830s, a Baptist missionary to India wrote to the American Bible Society for assistance in printing a Bengalese Bible. There was some concern, born of an 1833 meeting of the Salem, Massachusetts Baptist board of foreign missions, that care be taken that the Greek word βαπτίζω (*baptizo*) be translated with emphasis on full immersion.¹³³ However, the bibles from the American Bible Society followed the English translation and rendered βαπτίζω as “baptized” or its equivalent in a non-English language. “Baptized,” the Baptists argued, was a “plot of the papal hierarchy;” a Greek word “untranslated, in Roman letters with English endings, to permit infant sprinkling.”¹³⁴ If the American Bible Society capitulated to the Baptists then all of the denominations that practiced infant baptism would be alienated; if not, the Baptists would be livid. In the end the American Bible Society declared in 1836 that its biblical translation would “conform to the accepted

¹³¹ Ibid., 244.

¹³² Ibid., 245.

¹³³ Ibid., 246.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 247.

English version” in an effort to permit “common use by all denominations.”¹³⁵ Furious, the Baptists formed their own American and Foreign Bible Society and proceeded to remove themselves from all pan-Evangelical cooperation.

Congregational churches began to question the wisdom of interdenominational voluntary societies as well. Agents of those societies, “like the locusts of Egypt,” swarmed Evangelical churches in search of support.¹³⁶ Ministers found themselves yielding their pulpits to these agents of interdenominational organizations more and more regularly. While they could certainly agree with the work done by these societies, concerns were raised about the loss of denominational teaching and preaching. In 1836 the General Association of Massachusetts (Congregational) passed a resolution that the operations of such agents was “an unauthorized interference with the rights, duties, and discretion of the stated ministry; dangerous to the influence of the pastoral office, and fatal to the peace and good order of the churches.”¹³⁷ No more would Congregational churches in Massachusetts give unquestioned access to the agents of the pan-Evangelical societies.

Denominational divides and withdrawal from the pan-Evangelical voluntary societies affected Evangelical influence in the United States, but no issue reduced Evangelical cooperation like the question of slavery. In the early years of the Evangelical movement, immediately after the Revolutionary War, the three major Evangelical

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ A Protestant [pseud.], *Protestant Jesuitism* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1836, 132, <https://tile.loc.gov/storage-services/public/gdcmassbookdig/protestantjesuit00colt/protestantjesuit00colt.pdf> (accessed October 16, 2023).

¹³⁷ The General Association of Massachusetts Proper, *Minutes* (1836), 8-9, quoted in Foster, 272.

denominations, Methodist, Baptist, and Presbyterian, opposed slavery. Influenced by the egalitarianism of the Quakers, early Methodist preachers like John Wesley and Francis Asbury had begun the movement against slavery in their church.¹³⁸ Thus the Methodist General Conference of 1780 declared slavery “contrary to the laws of God, man and nature, and hurtful to society,” and “contrary to the dictates of conscience and pure religion.”¹³⁹ The same conference ordered all Methodist preachers to free their slaves and urged rank-and-file Methodists to do the same. Four years later the General Conference threatened to excommunicate any Methodist who had not freed their slaves within two years. Southern Methodists were infuriated and threatened to withdraw from the denomination, so within six months the threat of excommunication was rescinded. Methodist preachers, however, continued to exhort their fellows on the Christian virtue of anti-slavery.

Such exhortations seemed to have little influence on southern Evangelicals, whether the entreaty came from Methodist, Baptist, or Presbyterian preachers. The expected dramatic decrease in the numbers of enslaved people, to be caused by the cumulative and gentle work of conscience on good Christians, never materialized. As the cotton economy expanded in the South, so did the numbers of the enslaved.¹⁴⁰ Concerned for unity over morality, the Methodist General Conference relinquished control of regulations on slavery to the local conferences in 1812.¹⁴¹ Those southern preachers

¹³⁸ Frances Fitzgerald, *The Evangelicals: The Struggle to Shape America* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2017), 50.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

shifted from an anti-slavery stance to preaching the proper treatment of the enslaved, effectively sanctioning the practice. What had begun as a movement faced with immoral practice by Christians capitulated to the cause of unity. Methodists had argued that no Christian could participate in a practice contrary to the “dictates...of pure religion” in 1780, but would not make anti-slavery a condition of salvation only thirty years later. Evangelical drive for conversions had preempted morality.

By the 1830s the preaching of Presbyterian Charles Grandison Finney and anti-slavery journalism of William Lloyd Garrison in the north brought abolitionism back to the forefront of Evangelical thought, making southern Evangelicals feel that they were under assault. Associates of these two major American abolitionists covered the south with pamphlets that used Evangelical theological and moral language to condemn the practice of slavery and preach the duty of Christians to emancipate their slaves.¹⁴² Southern clergy, including Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians, and some Episcopalians, replied to this onslaught with theological and biblical arguments of their own. They insisted that slavery was condoned in Scripture: God had condoned the practice for the Jews of the Old Testament, and Paul had not denounced its practice in Roman society though there were several opportunities to do so. In fact, Paul had commanded slaves to obey their masters, they argued. In addition, they began to argue for a different role for the church in society than what had been proclaimed by the pan-Evangelical movement.

The pan-Evangelical movement, by its very existence, demonstrated that the church had a role in shaping society. The voluntary societies had worked to spread morality and righteousness through education and publishing. Missionary societies had

¹⁴² Ibid.

been founded on the idea that Christian morality was the only weapon in the fight against anarchy and heathenism in the west. Pan-Evangelical donations had provided bibles, educational materials, and ministers to end what they perceived as the decline of American morality. Southern preachers, however, began to argue that the church had no role in matters of social regulation. Southern Evangelicals returned to an idea that had been proffered at a time when Methodists, Baptists, and Presbyterians had been minority bodies trying to protect their distinctiveness, a time before the Revolutionary War. Surrounded by numerically and politically powerful bodies like Anglicans and Congregationalists, these small Christian bodies had developed the doctrine of the “spirituality of the Church.” This doctrine held that “the Church, as an order of grace, was permitted no official involvement in the social reform of the state, an order merely of justice.”¹⁴³ Feelings of alienation from the world around them once again led southern Evangelicals to pull inward and insist the church had no justifiable part to play in arguments about slavery.

Northern and southern Evangelicals debated the merits and demerits of slavery for more than a decade. The final straw came in 1844 when, returning to their earlier threats, the Methodist General Conference excommunicated a southern slaveholding bishop and The Baptist General Conference passed a resolution denying recognition of any missionary who would not pledge themselves to the cause of emancipation.¹⁴⁴ By 1845, southern Methodists and Baptists broke with their denominations over the issue, forming the Southern Baptist Convention and the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, removing a

¹⁴³ Ibid., 52.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 51.

combined total of almost three million Evangelicals from the pan-Evangelical movement.¹⁴⁵ Two of the largest Evangelical denominations were now divided. Mounting financial and personnel losses further weakened the national Evangelical movement.

As the century continued, more and more denominations came to protect their own distinctiveness over and above the great works of cooperation between Evangelical bodies imagined in the beginning of the century. While some Evangelical cooperative work did survive into the early twentieth century; the loss of prestige and power suffered in the second quarter of the nineteenth century coupled with the upheaval caused by the financial crisis of 1837, proved the death knell for what had been imagined as a unifying and world conquering Evangelical empire. Who and what, though, were to blame for this loss? Evangelicals suspected their ancient foe, the pope.

Chapter 5: Enemies All Around

The combined losses suffered by the Evangelical movement were compounded over the first half of the 1800s. The voluntary societies began to lose ground among the established Evangelical churches such that the reach of their influence was limited, little by little, over the course of the second quarter of the 1800s. Presbyterians and Congregationalists began retreating from cooperation with other denominations, further limiting the strength of the pan-Evangelical movement. The rise of alternative movements, like the Christian Church that grew out of the Cane Ridge Revival in

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

Kentucky and the work of the Campbells in Pennsylvania, drew both members and funding away from the movement. Methodists and Baptists started to see themselves as both unique and mistreated by the older Evangelical denominations. It would be easy to imagine that the leaders of the movement began to recognize its slow demise caused by their own behavior and long-standing theological differences that had been overlooked in the drive for growth and the spread of salvation, but that was not the case. Instead, the powerful Evangelical denominations that had been at the heart of the cooperative efforts to evangelize and save America believed their loss of power was caused by outside forces working to undermine both Evangelical Christianity and the American republic. They began to blame Roman Catholics.

Anti-Catholic sentiment had long been a part of the American mind. The original colonists brought with them a deep and abiding malice toward the Roman Catholic Church and its hierarchy. Focus on the nascent nation and its experiment in democracy had, however, by the early nineteenth century made the question of the pope fade into the mists of memory and history. The small number of Catholics in the United States made the question even less important in the early years of the new nation, until waves of Catholic immigrants brought the question back to the fore. In the second and third decades of the eighteenth century American minds were drawn back to the enemy that had plagued the thoughts and dreams of their grandparents. A power struggle between Catholic laymen and the bishop of the Diocese of Philadelphia attracted the attention of the whole nation. This was followed by an outbreak of violence against Catholics and a surge of anti-Catholic publishing. Protestants began to question whether Catholic

immigration was, in fact, an unarmed invasion by papal forces. In the face of waning power and influence Evangelicals began to suspect their losses were not of their own doing, but caused by rising Catholic population.

Seventeenth century colonists to America left a mother-country that had a decided anti-Catholic point of view. English settlers had grown to adulthood in a nation that had spent more than a century fearful of Roman Catholic plots and invasion. Their parents had lived through the wars with Catholic France and had feared the ascendancy of the pope to his former supremacy over England with a French victory. They had survived the return of Catholicism in England during the reign of Mary Tudor and heard the tales of Protestants burned at the stake for their “heresy.” England had witnessed the plots of Catholics against Elizabeth I and James I. They had read or heard of the Jesuits Campion and Parsons, the story of the attempts to return the Catholic Mary, Queen of Scots, to the throne of England, fear over the Spanish Armada, and the Gunpowder Plot that attempted to murder James I. They came to the colonies in America thoroughly convinced that Catholicism was a “dangerous and constantly threatening force.”¹⁴⁶

Prejudice against Catholics and Catholicism remained a mainstay of American sentiment throughout the colonial period. Some argument can be made that anti-Catholic feeling was responsible for the outbreak of the Revolutionary War. In 1774, Parliament passed the Quebec Act, designed to bestow toleration to Catholics in Quebec and “include in that province French settlers of the Ohio country.”¹⁴⁷ American colonists

¹⁴⁶ Ray Allen Billington, *The Protestant Crusade 1800-1860: A Study in the Origins of American Nativism* (New York, NY: The Macmillan Company, 1938), 2.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 16.

were indignant. They saw the act as an attempt by George III to create an alliance with Pope Clement XIV to “crush the spirit of liberty in America.”¹⁴⁸ The press decried the act as government participation in popish conspiracies designed to cause a war between Catholic Canadians and Protestant American colonists. Years later, a New Hampshire clergyman would write that Americans were convinced that George III had, with the granting of the Quebec Act, “become a traitor...broken his coronation oath; was secretly a Papist,” and by his authority and in collusion with the pope, Americans would be “given up and destroyed, soul and body, by that frightful image with seven heads and ten horns.”¹⁴⁹ Many believed the common fear and hatred of Catholicism was the only thing that brought together disparate religious groups in the colonies enough to make the Revolutionary War possible.

When America made an alliance with Catholic France in 1778, however, attitudes began to shift. Now Catholics were on their side against the tyranny of George III. Instead, American loyalists began to bewail that such an alliance would lead to the usurpation of American Protestantism by Catholicism. French Catholics allowed in the door of America would hold it open for the “Bysshop of Rome and al hys detestable enormities.”¹⁵⁰ Patriots were unconvinced by these loyalist arguments, but their underlying anti-Catholic sentiments did not entirely disappear. They became quiet on the subject, if not more tolerant. As there were only around 30,000 Catholics in America at

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Quoted in Billington, 17-18, no note.

¹⁵⁰ *The Book of Common Prayer*, 1552, under “The Letanie,” http://justus.anglican.org/resources/bcp/1552/Litany_1552.htm (accessed March 2, 2023).

the conclusion of the Revolutionary War, that silence became normative until the nineteenth century.¹⁵¹

Anti-Catholicism came back in force with the advent of a surge of Catholic immigrants in the 1820s. Almost continuously at war between the American Revolution and the defeat of Napoleon at Waterloo in 1815, Europe had needed its surplus population. When peace came Europe was faced with the realities of a swollen population, reduced wages due to industrialization, and the terror of Malthusian theory which said that the surplus population would continue to rise exponentially in excess of the land's ability to sustain such a population.¹⁵² In England the pay scale had declined from one half to one third between 1810 and 1820, and in predominantly Catholic Ireland matters were made worse by the funneling of wealth to Protestant landlords in England, Scotland, and Wales.¹⁵³

All of this combined induced the English government to loosen controls on emigration, especially for the Irish. While the government was anxious to reduce the Irish population, it had little interest in expanding the population of a country that had been its enemy in the War of 1812, so grants were made between 1823 and 1827 to aid immigration to Canada.¹⁵⁴ Canada, however, was not what most Irish immigrants were

¹⁵¹ Billington, 20.

¹⁵² Thomas Malthus, *An Essay on the Principle of Population as it Affects the Future Improvement of Society with Remarks on the Speculations of Mr. Godwin, M. Condorcet, and Other Writers* (London: J. Johnson, 1798). <https://web.archive.org/web/20011202044207/http://www.ac.wvu.edu/~stephan/malthus/malthus.0.html> (accessed January 19, 2024).

¹⁵³ Billington, 33.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

expecting to find at the end of their long journey west. Scantly settled, cold and bleak, the vast majority of Irish immigrants continued their journey south across the border to America. They were joined by German Catholic immigrants who came directly to the young United States. Early in the new century there were only an estimated 70,000 Catholics in the whole country, served by one nation-wide diocese.¹⁵⁵ A third of the way through the nineteenth century, in 1830, Catholics in the United States could support ten dioceses including “six seminaries, nine colleges, thirty-three monasteries and houses of religious women, and many schools and hospitals.”¹⁵⁶ Immigration had increased the Catholic population many times over and Americans, especially Evangelical Protestants, took notice.

Fear of immigration began as a concern for the political future of the country. In particular, the pan-Evangelical movement was concerned for the balance of power in the western territories of the Mississippi Valley. Anxiety that great swaths of what was Protestants’ right by divine command might be taken from them energized giving to the great missionary societies of the early nineteenth century. But it was not enough to recapitulate the same old arguments. To bring in the funds “a logical embellishment was a more emphatic appeal to the element of fear.”¹⁵⁷ Lyman Beecher, a Presbyterian minister, worked to stimulate the Evangelicals in just such a way:

...if we do fail in our great experiment of self-government, our destruction

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 37.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Foster, 205.

will be as signal as the birthright abandoned, the mercies abuse and the provocation offered to beneficent Heaven...No spasms are like the spasms of expiring liberty, and no wailings such as her convulsions extort. It took Rome three hundred years to die; and our death, if we perish, will be as much more terrific as our intelligence and free institutions have given us more bone, and sinew and vitality. May God hide me from the day when the dying agonies of my country shall begin!¹⁵⁸

What seems like an unbelievable and fabricated fear was taken up quite readily among American Evangelicals. The old-world fears of the divine right of kings, feudalism, and associated Catholicism spurred the fear of a papal takeover of the United States. Whereas fears for the western territories had begun with concerns for an uneducated and immoral populace, evidenced by the American Tract Society's statement in 1832 that, in the west, "the Gospel must have a greater prevalence, or millions of souls will be left to perish in the native darkness of their minds," but later in the same decade immorality and ignorance was no longer a fearful enough enemy.¹⁵⁹ The pan-Evangelical movement's missionary zeal for the west required a "dreadful foe, precise in form and substance," and most importantly, "mysterious in power."¹⁶⁰ Vague notions of sin, immorality, and ignorance were too general to stimulate and excite Evangelicals; the enemy required was the "Whore of Babylon," the "Man of Sin," the pope.¹⁶¹ The Vermont Bible Society had fully accepted the redefinition of the enemy in its *Eighteenth*

Annual Report:

¹⁵⁸ Lyman Beecher, D.D., *Plea for the West*, 2nd ed. (Cincinnati, OH: Truman & Smith, 1835), 46-47.

¹⁵⁹ American Tract Society, *Seventh Annual Report* (1832), 34, quoted in Foster, 205.

¹⁶⁰ Foster, 205.

¹⁶¹ For a full treatment of this shift in the definition of the enemy of pan-Evangelicalism in the late 1830s, see Billington, "Saving the West from the Pope, 1835-1840," 118-135.

The Pope, and others of congenial spirit, are sending men and money into this country, for the purpose of establishing here, the kingdom of the Beast. And while many may be disposed to laugh at the project as too chimerical to demand a moment's serious attention, it is an actual fact, that in some places, they are acquiring a power which begins to look down all opposition.¹⁶²

Catholic hierarchical structures rubbed republican Americans the wrong way. Echoes of monarchy and absolute power vested in one organization, or one man, made Protestants devoted to the democratic ideals of the new nation suspicious of Catholics and their intentions. In October of 1829 the First Provincial Council of Catholicity in America met in the city of Baltimore.¹⁶³ The gathered hierarchy of the growing American Catholic church hoped that a public display of the inner workings of the church would quell the suspicions that Catholics were a secretive and foreign syndicate. The Bishop of Baltimore hoped that a visible and clearly American hierarchy would overcome the “otherness” of the Catholic Church in the minds of Americans. It may have worked if the gathered bishops had eschewed the trappings of the hierarchy and made conciliatory statements to their Protestant American brethren, but they did neither. Wrapped in the cassocks and cottas, and wearing the biretta, the assembled clergymen must have appeared to be an invading force from the past. The council compounded the injury by issuing decrees urging Catholic parents to send their children to parochial schools in order to save them from “corruption of their morals” in Protestant Sunday schools and ordering the use of the Douay version of the Bible as opposed to the “corrupt translations” in use by their

¹⁶² Vermont Bible Society, *Eighteenth Annual Report*, 6, quoted in Foster, 206.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*

Protestant countrymen.¹⁶⁴ Reported on in the press, the Provincial Council's ostentatious display of both the power and the ideology of Catholicism turned many Americans against the church.

A conflict between congregation and bishop in Philadelphia soon after the council cemented the Catholic church's anti-democratic position in American minds. The conflict had begun in 1808 when St. Mary's Cathedral had been built by the congregation and control of the property had been given to a board of lay trustees rather than the bishop of the diocese.¹⁶⁵ The trustees had also asserted their right to name pastors for the newly constructed cathedral church, which brought them into open conflict with the bishop diocesan. The fray ignited and cooled repeatedly over the course of twenty years, until a newly appointed bishop, Henry Cowell, attempted to assert his authority and control by withdrawing the privileges of the cathedral from the trustees' chosen pastor that ultimately led to the pastor's excommunication in 1821.¹⁶⁶ Intervention by the pope forced the now excommunicated pastor into retirement, but did not quash the resistance of the trustees. In 1830, Conwell also retired with the conflict between laity and the diocese unresolved. His successor, Francis Patrick Henrick, pressed the trustees to accept his authority over the cathedral property and its pastors and, when they refused to capitulate, placed St. Mary's under an interdict, barring the cathedral from all

¹⁶⁴ Peter Guilday, *A History of the Councils of Baltimore (1791-1884)* (New York, NY: The Macmillian Company, 1932), 94, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=wu.89064466170&seq=9> (accessed January 26, 2024).

¹⁶⁵ Billington, 38ff.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.* 39.

ecclesiastical functions.¹⁶⁷ The congregation, forced to resort to other places of worship, removed their financial support and the trustees were left with no recourse but to submit to Bishop Henrick's authority.

Protestants supported the trustees throughout the duration of the conflict. In 1822, when the trustees and their supporters were blocked by opposing forces from voting in a church election a mob, including many Philadelphia Protestants, incited a riot in the cathedral precincts in which several people were seriously injured.¹⁶⁸ When the trustees turned to the secular legislature in 1823, asking that they pass a law mandating the choice of pastor to the laity of a congregation, Protestant laymen and clergy wrote petitions of support for the bill claiming that the appointment of pastors by the Catholic hierarchy was the same as allowing the Pope to appoint American pastors and was "incompatible with the freedom of American political institutions and derogatory to the character of a republican government."¹⁶⁹ Protestant legislators acquiesced to the demands, but the governor vetoed the bill. Having failed in the attempt to grant the appointment of pastors by laymen, Protestants followed this with a bill which would legally vest boards of lay trustees with exclusive authority over all church property.¹⁷⁰ Protestant minds were now fixed on the rights of Americans (even Catholics) against the despotic European wiles of the Catholic hierarchy that seemed determined to import the autocracy of the old world into the new.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 40.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 41.

What would appear to be an inter-Catholic conflict caught the imagination of the American public. More than thirty-seven books were published during the struggle that offered opinions on the Catholic hierarchy.¹⁷¹ American Protestants, ignorant of the organization and structure of the Catholic church, viewed the conflict as an example of the democratic rights of the trustees against the autocratic tyranny of the bishop and pope. If it was true, as many Americans seemed to believe based on this peculiar event, that Catholicism was antithetical to American democracy, then Catholics would be a deleterious influence on America as a nation. The press decried the bishop's behavior as "tyrannical and unchristian...repugnant to our republican institutions" and the trustees' loss of control over St. Mary's a "singular specimen of papal authority exercised over the people of a free nation."¹⁷² Imagined anti-democracy had been declared anti-Christian, and all American Catholics were painted with the same brush.

Publishing about the Philadelphia controversy was neither the beginning or the end of anti-Catholic polemic in the first half of the nineteenth century. Many Protestant publishers, wary of Catholic social, political, and theological influence in the United States made their opinions known through the written word. One of the most strident anti-Catholic newspapers was *The Protestant*, which appeared weekly in New York beginning on January 2, 1830.¹⁷³ Edited by Presbyterian minister George Bourne, *The Protestant* was clear in its denouncement of Catholics and Catholicism. In a call for

¹⁷¹ Billington, 50 note 31.

¹⁷² *American Catholic Historical Researches*, XI (July 1894), 129-132 and *The Philadelphian* (June 1829), quoted in Billington, 40.

¹⁷³ Billington, 53.

articles published in the *Observer*, a secular New York newspaper, *The Protestant* described its mission to publish stories about the “rise and progress of the Papacy,” the history of Catholicism in Europe, its “modern pretensions,” and the current efforts of the church to “recover and extend its unholy dominion, especially on the western continent.”¹⁷⁴ The same advertisement sought authors who could describe Roman Catholicism’s “desolating influence upon individual advancement, domestic comfort, and national prosperity.”¹⁷⁵ This weekly newspaper was not shy about its intentions or its attitude toward Catholicism or its adherents. *The Protestant*’s singular purpose was to incite distrust and hatred toward all things Catholic.

The Protestant received a mixed review. There were a great many American Protestant churchmen, especially among Evangelicals, who cheered the work of the anti-Catholic Bourne. Moderate Protestants, however, feared that such outright attacks on Catholicism would only rouse sympathy from the populace and do the church much more good than harm. Their tactic was to ignore Catholics and hope that they would fade back into the obscurity they had once inhabited in the United States.¹⁷⁶ *The Protestant*, under new leadership, attempted to moderate its contents—slightly. Changing the name to *The Reformation Advocate* in 1832, the new mission intended to argue “by *solid arguments*, by *documents* and *facts*” the cause of Protestantism in the United States.¹⁷⁷ Soon another name change occurred, but the mission did not. Republished as *The Protestant Magazine*,

¹⁷⁴ *Observer* (New York, NY: November 14, 1829), quoted in Billington, 54.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 54-55.

¹⁷⁷ *The Protestant*, June 30, 1832, quoted in Billington, 56. Italics in the original.

and shifted to monthly distribution, it still disseminated articles “written against popery” and papers against the “great enemy of truth,” Rome.¹⁷⁸ This anti-Catholic publishing venture was not alone.

Many other anti-Catholic periodicals appeared during that tumultuous decade of the 1830s. Key among these were *Priestcraft Unmasked* and *Priestcraft Exposed* early in the decade.¹⁷⁹ In addition, 1834 saw the publication of the subtly titled *The Anti-Romanist* and *The Downfall of Babylon, or the Triumph of Truth Over Popery*, purportedly edited by a former Roman Catholic priest.¹⁸⁰ These were joined in the same year by *The Protestant Vindicator, in Defence (sic) of Civil and Religious Liberty Against the Inroads of Popery* edited by another Presbyterian minister, William Craig Brownlee.¹⁸¹ Brownlee made it clear in the first issue of the *Vindicator* that “Popery ought always to be bathed and execrated” by all Christians and by “every patriot and philanthropist.”¹⁸² It was the duty, Brownlee insisted, of every Protestant to save Roman Catholic men, women, and children from the “perversely deceitful” priests who led them “into the bottomless pit of everlasting perdition.”¹⁸³

These and many other anti-Catholic newspapers and magazines worked to spread the message that Rome, through the vehicle of massive Irish and German immigration,

¹⁷⁸ *The Protestant Magazine*, September, 1833, quoted in Billington, 56.

¹⁷⁹ Billington, 57.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 57, 92.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 92-93.

¹⁸² *American Protestant Vindicator, in Defence (sic) of Civil and Religious Liberty Against the Inroads of Popery*, August 20, 1834, quoted in Billington, 93.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*

was working to overthrow the Protestant religion and values of the United States. With those glorious accomplishments of the Revolution would go the American republican form of government as well. The Pope wanted to rule over America as an autocratic despot, but rather than invade with armies and cannon, the invasion was coming with immigrants that would undermine the democratic ideals of the United States, vote Catholics into roles of leadership, and gradually de-Protestantize the nation. Newspapers and magazines alone would not communicate the gravity of situation; however, books and pamphlets joined those anti-Catholic voices in the fight.

At the same time that these anti-Catholic newspapers proliferated, books and pamphlets were published that carried the message further afield. While there are many examples of such literature to choose from, the works of Lyman Beecher and William C. Brownlee serve as prime markers of the types of literature written by well-known Evangelical leaders that circulated in the 1830s. Lyman Beecher's *Plea for the West*, published in 1835, focused on the westward expansion of the nation and the perils of Catholic immigration in a land searching for meaning. Brownlee's *Popery, an Enemy to Civil and Religious Liberty: and Dangerous to Our Republic*, published in 1839, highlighted the "perils" of Catholicism found in recent immigrants and its detrimental effects on the American political mind. Both were influential in Evangelical circles.

Beecher's *Plea for the West* began as sermons preached from the pulpit of Park Street Church in Boston. In a series of fiery anti-Catholic sermons, Beecher worked to show that Catholicism and despotism were closely allied and opposed to American republican principles. As such, Catholicism was not only dangerous to the safety and

perpetuity of Protestant Christianity, but to the “property, and wisdom, and moral principles” of the established government.¹⁸⁴ The popularity of his sermons inspired other Boston Protestant ministers to follow suit. The religious press of the city took up the cry and connected, in the minds of their readers, the anti-Catholic sentiment brewing in the city with a local Ursuline convent. These publications insinuated that the girls who attended the Ursuline convent school were being converted to “Popery” and warned that all of the “leading citizens of Massachusetts” would, in time, be converted if some stand were not taken against the inroads of “Popery.”¹⁸⁵

These anti-Catholic tirades of ministers and press eventually led to violence. The early 1830s witnessed the homes of Irish Catholics in Boston attacked by mobs, anti-Catholic posters “warning of popish plots” put up around the city, and Catholic homes torn down and burned.¹⁸⁶ In August 1834 Lyman Beecher delivered three more violent anti-Catholic sermons in three separate Protestant churches in Boston to “overflowing audiences.”¹⁸⁷ Early morning on the following day the Ursuline convent in Charlestown, a suburb of Boston, lay in ruins. It had been burned by a mob of Protestant citizens in response to a spurious rumor of a girl purportedly converted to Catholicism, become a nun, and spirited away by the nuns of the convent.¹⁸⁸ While anti-Catholic sentiment was

¹⁸⁴ Beecher, 50-51.

¹⁸⁵ *Christian Watchman*, January 29, 1830, February 19, 1830, December 17, 1830; *The Protestant*, December 4, 1830, June 4, 1831, June 23, 1832, quoted in Billington, 70.

¹⁸⁶ For details of these violent acts see Billington, 70-71.

¹⁸⁷ Billington, 73.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

high, and there were likely plans in place for the violence that followed, it would be incredulous to claim that Beecher's preaching had no effect on the emotions of the crowds that supported the convent's destruction.

Salacious stories about convents and what went on inside, such as the one that inspired the attack on the Ursulines in Boston, became quite popular and profitable in the latter half of the 1830s. One such work, *The Nun*, was published the same year as the burning of the Ursuline convent. The next year, 1835, a work titled *Six Months in a Convent* was published as a supposed exposé of the Ursuline convent itself: it was subtitled: *The narrative of Rebecca Theresa Reed, who was under the influence of the Roman Catholics about two years, and an inmate of the Ursuline Convent on Mount Benedict, Charlestown, Mass., nearly six months, in the years 1831-2*. *Six Months* claimed to be the memoir of the very girl over which violence broke out in Boston. The Mother Superior of the Ursuline convent responded to *Six Months* with her own publication: *An Answer to Six Months in a Convent, exposing its falsehoods and manifold absurdities*.

Historians of anti-Catholic literature may argue the veracity of the stories purported to be true in *The Nun* and *Six Months*, but the most provocative of the anti-convent books released in the late 1830s, *Awful Disclosure of the Hôtel Dieu Nunnery of Montreal* by Maria Monk, has been proven fictitious in the years that followed its 1836 publication. It is a tale of a girl brought up in the Protestant faith until she entered the Hôtel Dieu convent in Montreal to gain an education. There, she was converted to Catholicism and decided to become a nun. The story, thus far, is exceedingly similar to that of *Six Months*, but Maria's tale becomes much more horrific. After taking her vows

she was immediately initiated into the “sinful ways of nunneries.”¹⁸⁹ The Mother Superior of Hôtel Dieu instructed that she must “obey the priest in all things,” and this she discovered to her “utter astonishment and horror, was to live in the practice of criminal intercourse with them.”¹⁹⁰ Any children born of these unions were baptized then immediately strangled. “This secured their everlasting happiness,” it was explained to Maria, “for the baptism purified them from all sinfulness, and being sent out of the world before they had time to do anything wrong, they were at once admitted into heaven. How happy, she exclaimed, are those who secure immortal happiness to such little beings! Their little souls would thank those who kill their bodies, if they had it in their power!”¹⁹¹

Maria went on to describe all manner of profligate living by priests and nuns throughout her stay in the Hôtel Dieu in the rest of her narrative and its sequel, *Further Disclosures by Maria Monk, Concerning the Hotel Dieu Nunnery of Montreal*, published the following year and subsequently bound with *Awful Disclosures* in later printings. Pregnant herself through “criminal intercourse” with a priest, Maria, unable to bear the thought of the murder of her baby, decided to flee the convent. Rescued and taken to a charity hospital, Maria requested a Protestant minister to whom she could tell her story and he asked her to write the story for publication.¹⁹²

There are so many evidences against the truth of Maria Monk’s story in *Awful Disclosures* that it would be impossible to list them all. The most damning evidence is the

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 99.

¹⁹⁰ Maria Monk, *Awful Disclosures of the Hôtel Dieu Nunnery of Montreal* (New York: 1836), under “Chapter VI,” <https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/8095/pg8095-images.html> (accessed June 20, 2023).

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Ibid., under “Chapter XXIII.”

affidavit of her mother, Isabella Mills, which is printed in the appendix of later printings of *Awful Disclosures*. In that affidavit Maria's mother swore before a Justice of the Peace for the district of Montreal that Maria's story is fiction. Isabella testified that when she was about seven years old Maria had broken a "slate pencil in her head" and "since that time her mental faculties were deranged."¹⁹³ This injury and ensuing mental illness caused Maria to "make the most ridiculous, but most plausible stories."¹⁹⁴ As to the story that Maria had been a nun at the Hôtel Dieu in Montreal and escaped, her mother declared "it was a fabrication, for she never was in a nunnery."¹⁹⁵

As the pan-Evangelical movement in the United States was losing influence and power, anti-Catholic newspapers, organizations, pamphlets, books, and sermons began to proliferate. Fear of Roman Catholic immigration to the country, particularly to the West, fanned the flames of what was perhaps the first "Great Replacement Theory." This theory, so forcefully put forth by Lyman Beecher in his *Plea for the West*, postulated that the great mass of European immigration was a force "enlisted and officered...spreading across the land" in an attempt to wrest control of the government from Protestant American voters to install politicians loyal to European "demagogues" and to the pope.¹⁹⁶ Rather than sin and ignorance which led to immorality and crime, the pan-Evangelical movement had a newly defined enemy: Catholicism. Evangelical leaders shifted a great deal of energy to pointing out, and sometimes fabricating, the invasions of Catholics into the citadels of Evangelical power. If Evangelical influence was waning in

¹⁹³ Ibid., under "(AFFIDAVIT OF MY MOTHER.)."

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Beecher, 56.

the United States in the 1830s and 1840s, it was because it was being surreptitiously stolen away by Catholic immigrants in league with the pope.

Evangelical Episcopalians were no less enraptured by this battle against Catholic invasion than their non-Episcopalian counterparts. The *Protestant Episcopalian and Church Register* warned Episcopal clergymen to “combat papal designs on the west.”¹⁹⁷ Evangelical Episcopalians invested in the works of the Evangelical voluntary societies were just as likely to send money to help protect the west from papal invasion as any other Evangelical Christian. While they helped the fight against the enemy coming across the seas in Irish and German immigration, however, Evangelical Episcopalians began to suspect that there were enemies to be found in their midst, and that Catholics had invaded the hallowed halls of the Episcopal Church itself.

Chapter 6: Evangelical Versus High Church Episcopalians

The Episcopal Church had, from its foundation in the the eighteenth century, included both high and low church principles. The compromise reached at the convention of 1789 between the High Churchmen of Connecticut (and others), dedicated to the government of the church by bishops, and those who wished to form a church founded on republican principles, shows that there had never been a time in the Episcopal Church when unanimity had reigned. These parties, though disagreeing on points of government, ecclesiology, liturgy, and other matters, had existed in a kind of ecclesiastical détente, if not fraternal love.

One instance of High Church versus Evangelical understanding of the church

¹⁹⁷ Billington, note 12, 136.

after the compromise of 1789 was the controversy over bible societies involving Bishop Hobart. Bishop Hobart condemned the idea of a pan-Protestant bible society and was the chief architect of New York Bible and Prayer Book Society as a specifically Episcopal alternative to the American Bible Society. His chief opponent in that work was William Jay, an Episcopal layman, judge, and dedicated evangelical.¹⁹⁸ They fought a protracted pamphlet battle over the warring bible societies.¹⁹⁹ Where Hobart envisioned the Episcopal Church as the inheritor of the perfections of the primitive church, Jay saw the Episcopal Church as one part of “system of means” brought to light in the new age by which God would “introduce his Millennial [*sic*] Glory” and make all the kingdoms of the world the “Kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ.”²⁰⁰ The battle over the bible societies continued for eight years, and shows that Evangelical and High Church Episcopalians never came to an agreement on the matters that prompted the earlier compromise. They fought small skirmishes on disputed issues through writing pamphlets and books offering differing opinions, but never before the mid-nineteenth century went to war.

As the pan-Evangelical movement began to lose its sway over Americans and American political thinking in the mid-nineteenth century, however, things began to change. Evangelical leaders, like Lyman Beecher, raised the alarm that the Roman Catholic Church had begun a clandestine invasion of the United States through immigration, and that Evangelicals needed to come together to fight the “broad tide” of

¹⁹⁸ Mullin, 56.

¹⁹⁹ A full history of this “pamphlet warfare” can be found in Mullin, 54, note 73.

²⁰⁰ William Jay, “Bishop Hobart’s Strictures on Bible Societies,” *Quarterly Christian Spectator* 6 (1824), 37, quoted in Mullin, 58.

immigration bound to the “bidding of the powers of Europe hostile to free institutions,” like a republican form of government, and “associated in holy alliance to arrest and put them down.”²⁰¹ Evangelical Episcopalians saw the danger of Catholic invasion as well, but they began to suspect that there were Catholics invading the Episcopal Church itself, determined to reduce “the whole kingdom of Christ, on earth,” to the “dominion” of the Antichrist of “Romanism.”²⁰² Waning Evangelical influence in the country had heightened the anxiety of Evangelical Episcopalians about the High Church party and the influence of the *Tracts for the Times* from England gave them the necessary impetus to declare High Churchmen apostate from the Protestant faith.

The first American edition of the *Tracts for the Times*, those statements of “catholic principles” published in England by the leaders of the Oxford Movement, made its debut in 1839.²⁰³ That is not to say, however, that American High Churchmen had been unaware of the *Tracts* before that date. In particular, the editor of *The Churchman*, son and namesake of the first bishop of Connecticut - Samuel Seabury, quoted the *Tracts* positively in 1835 and 1836.²⁰⁴ Less positive opinions of the *Tracts* by Seabury can be found in the pages of that periodical in 1837, 1838, and 1839.²⁰⁵ While Seabury did not approve of all of the sentiments of the *Tracts*, of the very controversial *Tract 90* he said that the “principles of interpretation adopted in the Tract” are not “evasive or slippery,”

²⁰¹ Beecher, 52.

²⁰² McIlvaine, *Oxford Divinity*, 27.

²⁰³ Demille, 42.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 41.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 41-42.

but “honest, manly, and straightforward.”

Among American Episcopalians were many admirers of the *Tracts*, and many detractors. Among the bishops of the church some were identified as defenders of the so-called “Oxford divinity.” Among them were Dr. Seabury, Bishop Thomas Brownell of Connecticut, Bishop William DeLancey of Western New York, Bishop George Washington Doane of New Jersey, Bishop William Whittingham of Maryland, and Bishop Henry U. Onderdonk of Pennsylvania.²⁰⁶ Seabury’s opinions have been mentioned. Bishop Brownell said that he did not see the *Tracts* making any “material change to the doctrine, discipline, or usages of the Church,” and welcomed them as “tending to the ultimate elucidation an establishment of Catholic truth.”²⁰⁷ Bishop Benjamin Treadwell Onderdonk of New York, brother to Bishop Onderdonk of Pennsylvania, encouraged the laymen of his diocese to read the *Tracts* in his address to the diocesan convention of 1841. He believed that, by doing so, there would be “greater reverence in the use of the Prayer Book” and more care would be taken in the “ornamentation of churches.”²⁰⁸ Bishop Doane was an early friend of the *Tracts* and their authors. He brought to the Episcopal Church the first American edition of John Keble’s *The Christian Year*, and, in 1841, made a tour of England giving “moral support” to the Tractarians and their cause.²⁰⁹ He preached at the consecration of the parish church of St.

²⁰⁶ Peter B. Nockles, “The Oxford Movement in America,” in *The Oxford Movement: Europe and the Wider World*, ed. Stewart J. Brown and Peter B. Nockles (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 137-138 and Demille, 51-52.

²⁰⁷ Demille, 52.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 53.

Saviour's on September 2, 1841 and remarked that it was quite a "Catholic occasion."²¹⁰

There were, of course, those who found the *Tracts* suspicious, and some who thought them dangerous. Bishop Richard Channing Moore of Virginia at first found the *Tracts* distasteful, not because of their doctrinal or ecclesiological opinions, but because they were unsettling the "religious opinions of the members of this Church."²¹¹ Later, he dismissed the authors of the *Tracts* as unsound on the doctrine of justification.²¹² In Maryland, the election of the High Church Wittingham became a battleground over the *Tracts* when the rectors of the two cardinal parishes of the diocese, one High Church and one Evangelical, debated the issue in the convention of 1840. The Evangelical contingent of the convention attempted to force Wittingham to denounce the *Tracts* as a prerequisite to his election, but he refused. These were the gentler of the opponents of the *Tracts*.

The two most vehement adversaries of the *Tracts for the Times* were Bishop William Meade of Virginia and Bishop Charles Petit McIlvaine of Ohio. Bishop Meade appears to have made it his life's work as, first a priest and, later, bishop of the Diocese of Virginia to eject any and all Tractarian sympathies from that place. In 1842 Meade opined that the *Tracts* were full of "those erroneous and strange doctrines which, from time to time, in all ages, have assailed the peace of the Christian Church, and which the Bishops are solemnly sworn to banish and drive away."²¹³ This happened in the process

²¹⁰ Nockles, 138.

²¹¹ Demille, 47.

²¹² Ibid.

²¹³ John Johns, *A memoir of the life of the Rt. Rev. William Meade, bishop of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the diocese of Virginia* (Baltimore: Innes & company, 1867), 263.

of the election of an assistant bishop for the Diocese of Virginia. Meade argued against the election of Nicholas Hamner Cobbs, later bishop of Alabama, who would not speak against the *Tracts*. The Rev. William Leavell wrote later in his journal that Cobbs was “more beloved” than Johns, who was later elected because Bishop Meade “threw his patronage in the scale of Dr. Johns.”²¹⁴ He added that the election of Johns as assistant bishop was secured “after much unpleasantness, and...unfair management.”²¹⁵

If Meade was a vehement speaker against the “Oxford divinity” of the *Tracts*, Bishop McIlvaine of Ohio became the author *par excellence* against them when he published *Oxford Divinity compared with that of the Romish and Anglican Churches: with a special view to the illustration of the Doctrine of Justification by Faith, as it was made of primary importance by the reformers; and as it lies at the foundation of all scriptural views of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ* in 1841. In this monumental work of almost six hundred pages, McIlvaine makes pains to show that he is not attacking the authors of the *Tracts*, but the “system” they propose. “To some readers,” he wrote, “it may occur that...the writer has made insinuations disrespectful to the honesty and sincerity of the divines at Oxford.” His aim was not to villainize Newman, Keble, Pusey, et. al., but to show that they may be “*unconsciously* instrumental in the process described.”²¹⁶ That process he described with these words:

And so may Oxford Divinity be essentially Romish Divinity, built on the same foundations, squared with reference to the same cardinal points, and

²¹⁴ *MSS Journal of the Rev. William T. Leavell*, in the Virginia Diocesan Library, quoted in Demille, 50.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*

²¹⁶ McIlvaine, *Oxford Divinity*, 32, emphasis added.

by the law of its own nature, necessarily proceeding, in proportion as room is given, and the “Times” will bear, to make itself known in all those evils to the Gospel of Christ by which the sway of Romanism has been so lamentably distinguished.²¹⁷

Though he claimed no animosity toward the “Oxford divines,” his writing excoriated the *Tracts* as anathema to the Protestant faith. He went to great lengths to show that their understanding of the doctrine of justification is no doctrine of justification at all. “Their mode of representing the way of salvation,” he wrote, “is indeed ‘another gospel’ to us; another to the Church to whose doctrines we are pledged.”²¹⁸ All of this had the effect of, contrary to McIlvaine’s claims, declaring the Oxford divines—and by implication all of their American defenders and followers—apostate from the faith of the Protestant Evangelical church. These were the opening salvos of a war that would become more personal and ardent in the years to come.

Some of McIlvaine’s spite against the High Church party of the Episcopal Church may have been born out of his feelings about the missionary compromise he and Doane had negotiated in 1835. Recall that, in 1835, they had encouraged the church to declare itself the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society against the overwhelming power of the pan-Evangelical missionary societies that proliferated at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Part of that scheme had been to divide missionary opportunities between the High Church and Evangelical parties. The Evangelical wing had been assigned foreign missions, while the High Church party took responsibility for domestic missionary work. Within three years of that plan Evangelical Episcopalians had come to

²¹⁷ Ibid., 15.

²¹⁸ Ibid., 509.

understand the error of the agreement.

What at first appeared to be a fairly even division of labor in the mission field soon became a point of contention between the two parties. As the United States began to expand ever westward, all of the new missionary areas created in the west were assigned to bishops and priests of the High Church wing of the church. Evangelicals took note that, “exiled to the foreign fields,” they were losing ground in the United States and in danger of becoming a “minority party in the national church.”²¹⁹ Between 1835, when the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society was formed, and 1850, nine new dioceses were formed in the west.²²⁰ Of these, the Evangelical party could claim “ownership” of only two.

Added to the overwhelming majority of new dioceses founded or controlled by the High Church party, in 1841 a new institution was founded in the west that made Evangelicals feel even less secure in the Episcopal Church. In the spring of 1840, High Church bishop of the Northwest, and later bishop of Indiana and Wisconsin Jackson Kemper, recruited missionaries to preach the gospel and establish seminaries in his territory from General Theological Seminary in New York. The proposed plan for missionaries became a scheme among several seminarians to found a monastic institution in the west to do the work Kemper requested. With the support of both Kemper and members of the faculty (most notably William Whittingham, bishop-elect of Maryland),

²¹⁹ Butler, 142.

²²⁰ Prichard, Table 3. “Dioceses in States Admitted to the Union 1791-1859,” 129.

four students made a commitment to travel west as “a society of Protestant Monks.”²²¹

Inspired by the Oxford Movement and the *Tracts for the Times*, these four students lived a difficult life of poverty and deprivation while cheerfully working as missionaries in the surrounding area, traveling “1,851 miles on horseback and 736 miles on foot” by the end of the year and founded three new parishes.²²² Such a monastic venture made Evangelical Episcopalians very uncomfortable. The founding of such an institution in the west, where Evangelicals already felt they were losing ground to the High Church party, must have increased their anxiety tremendously. Though the monastic foundation did not last, and all but one of the original four monk-students abandoned the experiment, the foundation became the Nashotah House Theological Seminary that is still in operation today.

Losing missionary ground to the High Churchmen, especially the “advanced” High Churchmen of the Oxford variety, and the foundation of a monastic venture in the west, were enough to raise the suspicions of the Evangelicals in the church against their brethren. Those suspicions were only exacerbated by the actions of a Roman Catholic bishop in the same year as Nashotah House’s foundation. On May 6, 1841 (the Feast of St. John at the Latin Gate), the bishop of Philadelphia, Francis Patrick Kenrick, wrote an open letter to the bishops of the Episcopal Church urging the bishops to come back to Rome based on the principles of the *Tracts*, particularly *Tract 90*. Such a blatant equation of the Oxford divinity with Romanism confirmed the suspicions of Evangelical

²²¹ Thomas C. Reeves, “James Lloyd Breck and the Founding of Nashotah House,” *Anglican and Episcopal History*, 65, no. 1 (March 1, 1996): 54.

²²² *Ibid.*, 60.

Episcopalians, especially Evangelical bishops, that the *Tracts* were devised to drag the Episcopal Church back into the waiting arms of the pope.

Kenrick's letter has been seen by some scholars as a blow to the relationship between the Evangelical and High Church parties of the church.²²³ An examination of Kenrick's letter, however, shows that the only assistance he sought from the Oxford Movement or the *Tracts* was a veiled reference to Newman's *Tract 79 On Purgatory (Against Romanism No. 3)*. Kenrick asserted that the "writers of the Oxford Tracts," in examining the Roman concept of purgatory were "scarcely...able to sustain an objection" to the doctrine.²²⁴ In fact, Newman wrote in *Tract 79* that, "Romanism in the theory may differ little from our own creed; nay, in the abstract type, it might even be identical, and yet in the actual framework, and still further in the living and breathing form, it might differ essentially."²²⁵ Moreover, Newman went on in his introduction to say that, regarding the doctrine of purgatory, "there have been for many ages in the Roman Church gross corruptions of its own doctrine," and that the author believed that "those corruptions still continue; that Rome has never really set herself in earnest to eradicate them."²²⁶ The only other use of the Oxford authors by Kenrick acknowledged that the

²²³ See Butler, 108 ff., and Nockles, 148-149.

²²⁴ Right Rev. Francis Patrick Kenrick, *Letter on Christian Union, Addressed to the Bishops of the Protestant Episcopal Church* (Philadelphia: Eugene Cumminskey, 1841; repr., Miami: HardPress, 2019), 9.

²²⁵ Anonymous (John Henry Newman), *Tracts for the Times*, "Tract Number 79, On Purgatory (Against Romanism No. 3)", 1840, <https://anglicanhistory.org/tracts/tract79.html>, (accessed June 12, 2024).

²²⁶ *Ibid.*

Tracts “scarcely ventured to touch the very delicate point of Papal supremacy.”²²⁷ Any equation, therefore, of the *Tracts* as a catalyst to “swim the Tiber” based on Kenrick’s letter is untenable. Kenrick simply took the opportunity of the growing unrest between High Church and Evangelical Episcopalians, based on the escalating tensions between Evangelicals and Roman Catholics in the United States, to attempt to lure those bishops exhausted by the fray and unsure of their own position in the Episcopal Church to make the leap to Rome. Evangelical Episcopalians, however, would aim their attack on High Church sympathizers with the *Tracts* a little lower down the ecclesiastical ranks.

Public scandal engulfed the Episcopal Church in 1843 when Mr. Arthur Carey was ordained as a deacon in the Diocese of New York. Arthur Carey had attended the school in Burlington, Vermont “maintained by Bishop Hopkins,” where he had been inducted into High Church thought and principles of the early nineteenth century.²²⁸ He was considered “[t]houghtful and reserved, even as a boy, precocious in his studies, ascetic in his life, brilliant in his writings, daring in his thinking, “ and “gifted with a singular purity and sweetness of character.”²²⁹ He enrolled at the General Theological Seminary at the height of the influence of Oxford and the *Tracts* in 1839. Benjamin Treadwell Onderdonk, bishop of the Diocese of New York, was its president. Clarence Walworth, a former student, described him as a “high-churchman of the highest type,”

²²⁷ Kenrick, 11.

²²⁸ DeMille, 55.

²²⁹ Ibid.

and “strongly inclined in favor of the Oxford movement.”²³⁰ Though already well disposed to the ideas of the High Church party, these evolved in Carey’s time at General Seminary and led to one of the first Evangelical/High Church public battles of the nineteenth century.

Walworth and Carey grew close as students at General Seminary. In his memoir of his time at General, Walworth recalled a time when he was alone in his room, “unoccupied” and unable to read in the evenings because his “sight had begun to fail.”²³¹ Expressing sympathy for his failing sight, Carey offered to read to him and Walworth recalls him reading from the “Gospel of St. John, beginning at the fourteenth chapter,” in a way that made him appreciate “fully the solemn beauty of the Holy Scriptures.”²³² He also encountered Carey in a discussion and debate club, of which Carey was the president, and found in that setting that Carey’s “doctrine was all on the High-Church side, and gave no countenance to what is known as Evangelical Protestantism,” but that he made his position known with “no wounding in his words...no personal sting.”²³³ Walworth was much affected by Carey and his positions, and recalled that “[h]is influence over me was at once established,” and that a half-century later when he compiled his memories of General Theological Seminary he “thank[ed] God for him

²³⁰ Clarence Augustus Walworth, *The Oxford Movement in America, Or, Glimpses of Life in an Anglican Seminary*, Google Books (New York: Catholic Book Exchange, 1895), 5. https://www.google.com/books/edition/The_Oxford_Movement_in_America_Or_Glimps/6Y9HAAAAYAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1, (accessed June 14, 2024).

²³¹ *Ibid.*, 10.

²³² *Ibid.*, 11.

²³³ *Ibid.*, 10.

still.”²³⁴

When Arthur Carey had completed his seminary education he approached the rector of the parish to which he had “been connected,” St. Peter’s Church in New York City, to request the canonically required testimonials for his ordination.²³⁵ The Rev. Hugh Cotton Smith approached his vestry for their required signatures on the first Tuesday in June, and received the signatures of the vestry on the letters to the bishop.²³⁶ He had already signed one of the testimonials requiring his signature, but had failed to append his own signature to the letter approved by the vestry. Carey was “out of town” for nearly three weeks and did not return to Smith until June 21 to collect the requested testimonials.²³⁷ When he did, Smith informed him that he had the testimonials signed by the vestry, and the testimonial of the rector that the canons required, and that he would sign the vestry’s letter if Carey could answer some question so that Smith could “be satisfied on some points in regard to which [he] had heard allegations.”²³⁸

Carey agreed to an interview with Rev. Smith and its continuation on the following day. This interview lasted, it seems, for four hours or more. During that interview, Rev. Smith asked Carey whether he had commented that he might seek ordination in the Roman Catholic Church if he were denied ordination in the Episcopal Church. There were other questions touching on the doctrine of purgatory and on the

²³⁴ Ibid., 11.

²³⁵ Hugh Smith and Henry Anthon, *The True Issue for the True Churchman*, (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1843),” <https://anglicanhistory.org/usa/carey/true1843.html>, (accessed May 6, 2024).

²³⁶ Ibid.

²³⁷ Ibid.

²³⁸ Ibid.

Articles of Religion, the Council of Trent, denial of the cup to Roman Catholic parishioners, and Carey's opinions on the "Reformation from the Church of Rome." In the intervening time between the two parts of the interview, Smith recorded what he remembered of his questions and Carey's responses. On the following day he offered the transcript to Carey for approval and editing should

the language in any case be stronger than he had employed, to modify and weaken it; in case it were defective, to add what he thought necessary to the true explication of his meaning; if it did not accord with his recollections, to make it conformable to them; and if, in any case, it faithfully represented what he had said, while he now wished to withdraw, modify, or qualify his expressions, freely so to do.²³⁹

Carey made some alterations to the language of his responses, but not to the meaning. Perhaps the most important of the questions Smith asked him on that June evening in 1843 was about his intention to "go over" to Rome should his ordination in the Episcopal Church be denied. In his corrected response the following morning Carey said that "if union with *the ministry of the Protestant Episcopal Church of this country* were not open to him, he *might possibly* have recourse to the ministry of Rome--not without pain or difficulty," and that "*he thought it much more likely that he would remain in the communion of our Church.*"²⁴⁰

Smith seems to conclude that Carey's refusal to publicly condemn both the Council of Trent and Roman Catholic practices implied that he was deeply sympathetic to Rome and would be an infecting element within the Episcopal Church if he were allowed to be ordained. Smith, an Evangelical churchman, was almost certainly embroiled in the anti-Catholic sentiments that were circulating in Evangelical circles in

²³⁹ Ibid.

²⁴⁰ Ibid., italics in original.

the 1840s. He refused to sign the testimonials and informed Bishop Onderdonk that he would not support the ordination of Carey to the diaconate. In the meantime Smith had shared his transcript of the interview of Carey with a fellow priest of New York City.

That priest is the last of the four major characters of the Carey ordination scandal: the Rev. Henry Anthon. Anthon was the rector of St. Mark's church and played a major role as Smith's companion in the remainder of the story.²⁴¹ There is little historical mention of Henry Anthon outside of the Carey ordination history. However, he is noted as one of the organizers of the American Church Missionary Society in 1860.²⁴² This society was formed in response to the domestic missionary losses of the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society compromise of 1835. The stated purpose of the American Church Missionary Society was to "advance the mission work agreeably to the views of religious truth and obligation which distinguish our *Evangelical Church*, and occupy still more extended fields of labor."²⁴³ From this later history it is clear that Anthon was as much an Evangelical as Smith, and that Smith likely went to Anthon in search of a sympathetic ally against Onderdonk, the "high-churchman of the highest type," in the confrontations to come.

Bishop Onderdonk took the concerns of Smith and Anthon seriously enough that he called for an "examination" of Carey on June 29, 1843, "at the Sunday School room

²⁴¹ Anonymous, "Disturbance of Public Worship," *The Churchman*, July 8, 1843, in *A Full and True Statement of the Examination and Ordination of Mr. A. Carey, Taken from "the Churchman" ... With an Appendix* (New York: James A. Sparks, 1843; repr., n.p.: ULAN Press, 2012), 8.

²⁴² Guelzo, 112.

²⁴³ Richard W. Albright, *A History of the Protestant Episcopal Church* (New York: Macmillan, 1964), 218.

of St. John's Chapel."²⁴⁴ Given Onderdonk's known sympathies, the bishop surprisingly invited the Revs. Smith and Anthon to attend and participate in the examination. The examination was attended by "the Bishop, Drs. Berrian, M'Vickar, Seabury, Anthon, and Smith; the Rev. Messrs. Haight, Higbee, and Price; and also Mr. Carey."²⁴⁵ Onderdonk, McVickar, Seabury, and Haight were all professors at General Theological Seminary, Bishop Onderdonk also serving as president of that institution. Seabury also served as editor of *The Churchman*, a periodical that would play a prominent role in the tempest that would follow. The Revs. Berrian and Higbee served in the Diocese of New York as rector and assistant rector of Trinity Church respectively. The Rev. Joseph Price was rector of St. Stephen's Church in Manhattan.

The questions asked of Carey by the assembled clergymen reiterated and expanded on the questions put forth by Smith in his initial interview. As examples of the questions and their responses by Carey, he was asked if he would submit to Rome for ordination if he was not ordained in the Episcopal Church, Carey responded "Possibly I might, after due deliberation, but think that I should more likely remain in our own communion, as I have no special leaning towards the joining of theirs at present."²⁴⁶ When asked if he "h[e]ld to and receive[d] the decrees of the Council of Trent," he responded, "I do not deny them—I would not positively affirm them."²⁴⁷ Asked about his acquiescence to a number of of the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion, rather than a response from Carey the examiners devolved into debate about whether they were

²⁴⁴ Smith and Anthon, *The True Issue for the Churchman*, n.p.

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

binding on ordinands in the Episcopal Church. Much of the transcript Smith made of the examination concerned differences of opinion on the approach to asking questions, written or verbal, to answers, written or verbal, and the minutia of the process to be followed. Smith and Anthon objected to Carey having any of the examiners serve as his counselor, despite several of them being his recent teachers and mentors. The transcript reveals a palpable feeling of division in the room. Smith and Anthon feel themselves the defenders of integrity and truth up against the heterodoxy of Onderdonk and the seminary professors. It is impossible to know where Berrian, Higbee, and Price's sympathies lie in the Evangelical/High Church divide, but important to note that the former rector of Trinity New York was none other than John Henry Hobart, the classical American High Churchman. Berrian and Higbee, therefore, may have sympathized with Carey's High Churchmanship, but shied away from its "advanced" Oxford form.

The examination ended with five of the examiners declaring Carey fit for ordination, Smith and Anthon dissenting, and the bishop unwilling to declare whether he would ordain Carey at the appointed time or not. Smith and Anthon subsequently and separately sent letters to Bishop Onderdonk protesting the ordination and requesting the bishop's "decision in the premises at the earliest possible period after it is formed."²⁴⁸ Hearing nothing in the interim, both priests wrote to the bishop the morning of the proposed ordination asking, once again, for notification of the bishop's decision. The bishop responded that he did not appreciate the "attitude of threatening" in the original letters of protest and request for notification.²⁴⁹ Anthon's letter of protest had closed with

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

the sentiment that the bishop's response was necessary so that, if Anthon disagreed with that decision, he might "take, if requisite, the only remaining step in my power to prevent the candidate's ordination."²⁵⁰ The bishop replied to both Smith and Anthon that the "attitude of threatening...preclude[d] the propriety of [his] replying to it."²⁵¹ The battle lines were set.

Not receiving the response they wanted, or any response at all, Smith and Anthon wrote out their protestations regarding Carey's ordination and arrived at St. Stephen's Church in Manhattan (Rev. Price's church, it should be noted) on the morning of the ordination, July 2, 1843. When the bishop asked, in the course of the liturgy of ordination, if there was anyone present "who knoweth any impediment or notable crime in any of these persons presented to be ordered deacons, for the which he ought not to be admitted to that office, let him come forth in the name of God, and show what the crime and impediment is."²⁵² The Revs. Smith and Anthon rose and read their pre-written objections before the assembled congregation that Carey held "sentiments not conformable to the doctrines of the Protestant Episcopal Church in these United States of America, and in too close conformity with those of the Church of Rome"²⁵³.

Onderdonk responded that the candidate, Carey, had already been examined by him and five other clergymen and deemed fit for ordination, so there was "no just cause for rejecting the candidate's application for holy orders," and "no reason for any change in the solemn service of the day" and commended all the ordinands "to the prayers of the

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² Ibid.

²⁵³ Ibid.

congregation."²⁵⁴ Smith and Anthon walked out. They later defended that action by claiming that to stay would have “seemed tacitly to sanction the very act against which we had just solemnly protested.”²⁵⁵ This, of course, was reported all over the diocese and in the national Episcopal periodicals, particularly *The Churchman*.

Within the week “correspondents” of *The Churchman* began to opine on the spectacle at St. Stephen’s. On July 8 the first described the scene and asked whether Smith and Anthon had “a clear right to do what they did.”²⁵⁶ This argument was made from the assertion that the case of Mr. (now Deacon) Carey was one which the church declared “the bishop *is to inquire*,” that the bishop “*had inquired*, and had accordingly made his official decision.”²⁵⁷ There were also long submissions on the difference between Carey’s difference of opinion and heresy, the foreknowledge of the bishop of the matter, and the ecclesiastical definition of the word “impediment.”²⁵⁸ As expected, most submissions to the avowedly high-church *Churchman* were in defense of Onderdonk and Carey while labeling Smith and Anthon hostile to church order and the “spirit of the age.”²⁵⁹

Smith and Anthon responded to these accusations offering the totality of the examination and ordination by publishing *The True Issue for the Churchman: A*

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

²⁵⁵ Ibid.

²⁵⁶ N.E.O., “From a correspondent of *The Churchman*,” *The Churchman*, July 8, 1843, in *A Full and True Statement of the Examination and Ordination of Mr. A. Carey, Taken from “the Churchman” ... With an Appendix* (New York: James A. Sparks, 1843; repr., n.p.: ULAN Press, 2012), 6.

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

²⁵⁸ For these arguments see Ibid., 10-14.

²⁵⁹ Ibid., 7.

Statement of Facts in Relation to the Ordination in St. Stephen's Church, New York. In this they defended their integrity, insisting that it was incumbent upon them to continue in the course that they had “conscientiously adopted and pursued...going calmly and resolutely forward to what they felt to be their duty.”²⁶⁰ In their publication they insisted they were standing up for “THE BANNER OF EVANGELICAL TRUTH--APOSTOLIC ORDER” raised in “the palmy days of White and Hobart.”²⁶¹

Smith and Anthon did have their defenders. Their only apparent defender in the pages of *The Churchman* was Arthur Carey himself. On July 29, 1843, he wrote comments to the editor on the contents of the upcoming *True Issue*, but insisted that he had “no desire to impute intentional unfairness to the Doctor (Rev. Smith).”²⁶² Asserting the next day that Smith had acted “entirely conscientiously” in his protest against the ordination, Carey wanted to make sure that Smith and Anthon’s version of the examination was not the only version available to the public. In the ways of Victorian courtesy, many of the letters printed in *The Churchman*, though defending Carey, overtly declared that they did not wish to declare Smith and Anthon anything other than conscientious and honorable.²⁶³

Outside *The Churchman* some defenses of Smith and Anthon were more strident.

In *Review of Bishop B.T. Onderdonk's Address in Respect to a Late Ordination*, the

²⁶⁰ Smith and Anthon, *The True Issue for the Churchman*, n.p.

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*, emphasis in original.

²⁶² Arthur Carey, “From the Churchman of July 29,” *The Churchman*, July 29, 1843, in *A Full and True Statement of the Examination and Ordination of Mr. A. Carey, Taken from “the Churchman” ... With an Appendix* (New York: James A. Sparks, 1843; repr., n.p.: ULAN Press, 2012), 80.

²⁶³ Arthur Carey, “New York, July 30, 1843,” *The Churchman*, August 5, 1843, in *A Full and True Statement of the Examination and Ordination of Mr. A. Carey, Taken from “the Churchman” ... With an Appendix* (New York: James A. Sparks, 1843; repr., n.p.: ULAN Press, 2012), 81.

anonymous author defended Smith and Anthon's actions at the ordination, saying that they could not have refrained from their protest without "incurring great guilt."²⁶⁴ Elsewhere he insisted that, despite their already registered protests to the ordination of Arthur Carey both in person at the examination and in writing in the days that followed, Smith and Anthon had no choice but to "be present and solemnly object" in St. Stephen's.²⁶⁵ Quoting McIlvaine of Ohio, the *Review* declared that "the whole Church owes a large debt of gratitude to them for their faithful, noble, and painful stand for the purity of her ministry."²⁶⁶ Ultimately, the author was concerned that other denominations were watching the unfolding drama of the Carey ordination scandal, and "looking on, in anxious suspense" for whether the Episcopal Church would "quietly acquiesce in this advance to ROME, or firmly place her foot on the word of God, and speak out in the distinct and energetic tones of a grieved and outraged PROTESTANTISM."²⁶⁷

One prescient observer wrote to *The New Englander and Yale Review* that "Drs. Smith and Anthon...had erred in speaking out publicly against the decision of their bishop, had acted more like free ministers of the gospel of Christ, than like Episcopalian presbyters," and that the result of the public airing of this confrontation would be that Mr. Carey, instead of being put down, "as a Papist obtruding himself among Protestants, will be honored and esteemed as almost a confessor, and, if he lives long enough, will be

²⁶⁴ Observer [pseud.], *Review of B. T. Onderdonk's Address in Respect to a Late Ordination* (Philadelphia: Stavely and M'Calla, 1843), <https://anglicanhistory.org/usa/carey/observer1843.html>, (accessed May 15, 2024).

²⁶⁵ Ibid.

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

²⁶⁷ Ibid., emphasis in original.

a Bishop.”²⁶⁸ It was not to be; though Seabury (one of his original examiners) made him assistant at the Church of the Annunciation, New York City, by the end of 1843 Carey had fallen ill and “in the judgement of his medical advisors, rendered expedient a voyage to Cuba.”²⁶⁹ Apparently suffering from tuberculosis, during the voyage he “began to bleed from the lungs...for about an hour,” and he died just off the coast of Cuba, “15 or 20 miles N.E. of the Moro Castle” and his body was “consign[ed] to a watery grave.”²⁷⁰

The very public prosecution of the differing opinions on the Carey ordination brought the divisions in the Episcopal Church to light. While the Carey case motivated and invigorated Evangelicals in the church, it also defined the issues they saw as threatening the church. They envisioned the threat in sharply defined terms: “liberty versus bondage; freedom versus form; Christ versus the Pharisees; the true catholicism of the Episcopal Church versus Roman Catholicism.”²⁷¹ Their first target after the death of Arthur Carey was the institution that had trained him: General Theological Seminary.

Many of those, including Rev. Smith, had questioned the role of the seminary in Arthur Carey’s “errors.” Moreover, in the midst of his questioning of Carey’s fitness for ordination, Smith and Anthon, members of the Board of Trustees of General, offered a resolution at a board meeting “especially in regard to the senior class,” to the “points at

²⁶⁸ Anonymous, “The Ordination of Mr. Arthur Carey,” *The New Englander and Yale Review*, 1, no. 4, October, 1843, <https://anglicanhistory.org/usa/carey/newenglander.html> (accessed May 20, 2024).

²⁶⁹ Samuel Seabury, *Joy of the Saints: A Discourse on the Third Sunday after Easter, A.D., MDCCCXLIV, Being the First Sunday after the Intelligence of the Death of the Rev. Arthur Carey, A.M., An Assistant Minister in the Church of the Annunciation, New York* (New York: James A. Sparks, 1844), <https://anglicanhistory.org/usa/carey2.html>, (accessed June 20, 2024).

²⁷⁰ Ibid.

²⁷¹ Butler, 111.

issue between us and the Church of Rome.”²⁷² The resolution failed. They offered another that a committee should examine the students on the “distinctive principles of the Church,” which also failed.²⁷³ Undaunted, another resolution sought to have the sermons of the senior class submitted to a committee of the board for inspection. This resolution was also voted down. Smith and Anthon were informed, in response to their final failed resolution, that doctrine was not “under the cognizance” of the board, and neither was “inquiry into the *doctrinal views*” of the seminary’s students “constitutionally within [their] province.”²⁷⁴

The Evangelical periodicals, like the *Episcopal Recorder*, trained their sights squarely on General Seminary. One edition of that paper highlighted the fact that Bishop Onderdonk was still a professor at the offending theological school and that “two of his reverend confederates” were members of the faculty when they “aided and abetted” the certification of Carey for ordination.²⁷⁵ This article went on to assert that the professors of the seminary “taught impressively” to the seminarians that they might “denounce the spirit and doctrines” of the Reformation, and still call themselves Protestants, that they might “adopt the dogmas of Trent” and still not call themselves “Romanists—at least not in any sense which would make it dishonest for them to remain in the communion of the Church in which they have been baptized; and even minister at her altars.”²⁷⁶ These

²⁷² Smith and Anthon, *The True Issue for the Churchman*, n.p.

²⁷³ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁵ *The Episcopal Recorder*, unknown March 15, 1845, unknown page, quoted in E. Clowes Chorley, “The Oxford Movement in the Seminary,” *Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church*, 5 no. 3 (Sept 1936), 185.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 185-186.

sentiments were echoed in homes and diocesan conventions.

The first convention to take any action was that of the Diocese of South Carolina in February 1844, two months before the death of Arthur Carey. At that convention a resolution passed that requested that members of the Board of Trustees of General Seminary from the Diocese of South Carolina “investigate the grounds of the rumors unfavorable to the institution.”²⁷⁷ It was hoped that, if the rumors were deemed “sound,” the diocese might be protected, and if “unsound,” “unjust stigma” would be removed from the seminary.²⁷⁸ This resolution led to a similar resolution at a subsequent meeting of the Board of Trustees, requesting a committee of seven be appointed to inquire and report to the board whether there were any grounds for the rumor that the seminary’s professors were teaching anything that deviated “from the standards of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States.”²⁷⁹

This resolution launched the official investigation of the Board into the views and syllabi of the faculty of General Seminary. The results of the investigation were to be reported to the General Convention of 1844 to be held in Philadelphia in October of that year. The committee of seven was made up of Hobartian High Churchmen and dedicated Evangelicals.²⁸⁰ Their method of inquiry was to submit written interrogatories to the faculty for response. It was clear to the faculty that the questions were intended solely to

²⁷⁷ *Journal of the proceedings of the fifty-fifth annual convention, of the Protestant Episcopal Church, in South Carolina; held in St. Michael's Church, Charleston, on the 17th, 19th, 20th, and 22nd of February, 1844* (Charleston: Miller & Browne, 1844), 21, <https://digital.tcl.sc.edu/digital/collection/chchconfmin/id/17243>, (accessed July 2, 2024).

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁹ *Proceedings of the Board of Trustees*, Vol. II, 393, quoted in Chorley, 186-187.

²⁸⁰ Chorley, 187.

question the orthodoxy of the three High Church members of that body: “Benjamin Issac Haight, professor of Pastoral Theology and Pulpit Eloquence; John David Ogilby, professor of Ecclesiastical History; and Bishop Onderdonk,” as they were required to personally attend a meeting to answer questions in person.²⁸¹ Angered by the spirit of prejudice evidenced by the questions, the faculty were taken by a “spirit of noncooperation and defensiveness.”²⁸² Haight refused to attend the meeting, questioning the constitutionality of the the questions. Onderdonk felt that the the request assumed for the committee “a right to sit in judgement” on his “episcopal acts and counsels” against which he lodged a forceful protest and replied that he had “nothing more to reply to it.”²⁸³ Even the Evangelical faculty members, Turner, Moore, and Wilson, thought the inquest was responding to “idle and malicious rumors.”²⁸⁴ Ogilby, however, offered the most stringent rebuke:

Without impugning the motives of the Committee, or of any member thereof, I regard the invidious designation of *three* out of the *six* members of the Faculty, as evidence that the *effect* of the resolution (whatever its design) would be, if possible, to make the parties summoned criminate themselves. Though perfectly willing to give all reasonable satisfaction to the friends of the Seminary, in every proper way, and ready promptly to meet any charges which may be brought against myself, fairly and openly, I must respectfully, but peremptorily, decline being a party to so injurious a precedent.²⁸⁵

²⁸¹ Scott MacDougall, “Hidden Jesuits?: ‘Romanizing’ and Inquest at the General Theological Seminary, 1845,” *Anglican and Episcopal History*, Vol. 76, No. 1, Essays in American Episcopal History: Colonial, Revolutionary, and National Periods, (March 2007), 91.

²⁸² *Ibid.*

²⁸³ Chorley, 188-189.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 188.

²⁸⁵ *Proceedings of the Board of Trustees*, Vol. II, 433, quoted in Chorley, 188, emphasis in original.

It was clear to the members of the faculty that the committee of inquiry wanted to find a scapegoat, or three, to blame for the rumors abounding in Evangelical circles that General was a hotbed of Romanizing tendencies. In the face of such an attack on their number, and their academic freedoms, they banded together to frustrate the committee's purpose. In the face of such stonewalling, the committee had no sacrificial lamb to offer the Evangelical bishops and deputies of the 1844 General Convention. Instead, the Board of Trustees was forced to offer a report to the Convention that they felt "assured that the General Theological Seminary has never been in a more healthful condition than it is at the present time."²⁸⁶

The sentiment caused an uproar from those opposed to High Church ideas. A committee of members of General's Board of Trustees, including Bishop McIlvaine and Henry Anthon, offered the Convention a "Memorial from Seven Trustees of the General Theological Seminary" denouncing that General was "healthful," and pointing out that the completed report had only gained a passing vote in the board by a majority of one.²⁸⁷ This led the convention to authorize an episcopal visitation on the seminary and the production of forty-three more interrogatories to which the faculty were required to

²⁸⁶ *Journal of the Proceedings of the Bishops, Clergy, and Laity, of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America, assembled in General Convention, held in St. Andrew's Church, in the city of Philadelphia, from October 2d, to October 22d, inclusive, in the year of our Lord 1844. With an Appendix containing the Constitution and Canons, a list of the clergy, &c.* (New York: James A. Sparks, 1845), 230, https://www.episcopalarchives.org/sites/default/files/publications/1844_GC_Journal.pdf, (accessed July 5, 2024).

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 232..

respond in writing “at their earliest convenience.”²⁸⁸

The faculty duly responded to the questions set forth by General Convention and, when the episcopal visitation took place on October 31, 1844, a formal inspection was made. The inspectors included both bishops McIlvaine and Doane along with nine other bishops, so a mixed party. Their report to General Convention declared that the “interior arrangements” of the seminary offered no evidence of “superstitious or Romish practices,” and that the faculty’s responses to the interrogatories offered “the most appropriate reply to the current rumours [*sic*] respecting the doctrinal teaching of the Seminary.”²⁸⁹

Two successive investigations of the General Theological Seminary had been conducted attempting to root out the “Romanizing” problems within that institution. Neither had been successful in their endeavors: the first through noncooperation of the faculty, and the second because no evidence of such behavior could be found. Evangelicals in the church were still incensed that Carey had been ordained over the objections of reliable Evangelical churchmen. They blamed the “Romanizing” tendencies of Carey and other General students on the *Tracts for the Times* and their influence on General. Unable to reach their goal, they concluded the problem must be found higher up the ecclesiastical chain-of-command.

While the farcical collapse of the investigation of General was happening on the

²⁸⁸ “Journal of the House of Bishops” in *Journal of the Proceedings of the Bishops, Clergy, and Laity, of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America, assembled in General Convention, held in St. Andrew’s Church, in the city of Philadelphia, from October 2d, to October 22d, inclusive, in the year of our Lord 1844. With an Appendix containing the Constitution and Canons, a list of the clergy, &c.* (New York: James A. Sparks, 1845), https://www.episcopalarchives.org/sites/default/files/publications/1844_GC_Journal.pdf, (accessed July 5, 2024), 139.

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 188-189.

convention floor in 1844, “sinister rumors” about Benjamin T. Onderdonk’s morals had been circulating.²⁹⁰ The rumors were immediately investigated by Bishops Ives, Kemper, and DeLancey at the close of the session, and they found no ground for action.²⁹¹ These three were recognized, even at the time, as high-churchmen tending toward the “advanced” of the *Tracts*, so their decision may rightly be questioned on party divisions. But three other bishops, Otey of Tennessee, Elliott of Georgia, and Meade of Virginia, took up the cause and presented Bishop Onderdonk for trial. The nine articles of presentment accused Onderdonk of “impurely and unchastely” touching various “respectable ladies,” and of being “under the influence of and excited by various spiritous liquors.”²⁹²

The trial took place on December 10, 1844, in “the upper room of the Sunday-school building attached to St. John’s chapel in the city of New York.”²⁹³ The court heard testimony from various witnesses for ten days, with time off for Sundays and Christmas. In the end eight bishops voted for deposition: Chase (Illinois), McIlvaine (Ohio), Polk (Louisiana), Lee (Delaware), Johns (Virginia, Asst.), Eastburn (Massachusetts), Henshaw (Rhode Island), and Hopkins (Vermont).²⁹⁴ Of the eight, six were considered strong Evangelicals. Six voted for admonition: Ives (North Carolina), Doane (New Jersey),

²⁹⁰ DeMille, 63.

²⁹¹ Ibid.

²⁹² “Presentment, to the Bishops of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America, Papers of the Rt. Rev. George Washington Doane,” unpublished manuscript, Archives of the Episcopal Diocese of New Jersey, Trenton, New Jersey, n.p.

²⁹³ *The Proceedings of the Court convened under the third canon of 1844, in the city of New York, on Tuesday, December 10, 1844, for the trial of the Right Rev. Benjamin T. Onderdonk, D.D. Bishop of New York; on a Presentment made by the Bishops of Virginia, Tennessee, and Georgia* (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1845), 3.

²⁹⁴ DeMille, 64.

DeLancey (Western New York), Gadsden (South Carolina), Whittingham (Maryland), and Kemper (Missionary Wisconsin and Iowa, Provisional Indiana). All those who voted for admonition were High Churchmen. Two Evangelicals and a moderate High Churchman voted for suspension. Ultimately, the sentence was one of suspension, which Onderdonk obeyed until his death in 1861.

Later, in 1852, George Washington Doane, bishop of New Jersey, was presented by Bishops McIlvaine (Ohio), Meade (Virginia), and Burgess (Maine) for crimes of financial mismanagement. They saw an opening to remove the “political leader of the High Church party.”²⁹⁵ Though his diocesan convention, at the request of the three presenting bishops, cleared Doane of any wrongdoing, presentment before the House of Bishops went forward. The presentment was unsuccessful and Doane remained Bishop of New Jersey until his death in 1859.

Though it can never be proven that the trials of Benjamin T. Onderdonk and George Washington Doane, alongside the suspension of Henry U. Onderdonk, brother of Benjamin Onderdonk and bishop of Pennsylvania, were concerted efforts of the Evangelicals to remove High Church bishops, the cast of characters in each of these instances makes the suspicion of party warfare tenable. Scholars have described the presentments as “spurious and malicious” attacks; and the trials have been characterized as “hardly fair” in the “fevered atmosphere” of party spirit brought about by the Carey ordination and investigations of General Seminary.²⁹⁶ All of which was instigated by the frenzied hunt for Roman Catholic sympathizers in the Episcopal Church.

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 88.

²⁹⁶ MacDougall, 92, and DeMille, 64.

Conclusion

There is a tendency to believe there was a time in the Episcopal Church when beliefs and practices were homogenous, when every Episcopalian was the same. The simple truth is that such a time never existed. From the very beginning there were strongly held beliefs about ecclesiology, theology, and practice that were diametrically opposed to one another. When the church was reestablished after the Revolutionary War there were already two parties emerging. Bishops White and Provoost imagined a purely democratic church devoid of what they viewed as the trappings of aristocracy that marked the Church of England; while Bishop Seabury was dedicated to a vision of the church governed by bishops who held the bulk of the ecclesiastical power.

A compromise was reached at the convention of 1789 wherein the government of the diocese would be entrusted to bishops elected by the clergy and laity, and the church would be governed by a convention of two houses. The bishops of the church would form the House of Bishops, while clergy and laity elected at the diocesan level would make up the House of Deputies. This compromise negotiated a tenuous peace between the emerging high and low church parties. While the differences of opinion at the General Convention of 1789 concerned matters of church governance and whether power in the reestablished Episcopal Church would be held by an “upper class” or shared among all the faithful, questions about what constituted faithfulness and how to define the notion of

“the church” were already emerging.

The First Great Awakening had injected notions which are now defined as “Evangelical” into the conversation. Rather than simple membership in a historical church, conversion came to be understood as a personal and often emotional response to the truths of the gospel. These were ideals embraced by the low church members of the Episcopal Church, but accepted in a qualified manner by most of those who could be described as High Church. The problem for the High Churchmen was that notions of individual experiential faith negated the efficacy of the sacraments of the church and, at the same time, the authority of the clergy. These competing views began to widen the divide between the high and low church parties, but they lived side-by-side in a tenuous détente for many years.

The Second Great Awakening, that swept the United States from the end of the eighteenth century to the middle of the nineteenth increased the personal understanding of conversion and faith. Evangelicalism as a movement was born in this period, and many of the historical denominations embraced Evangelicalism as their central identity. Presbyterians, Congregationalists, and the Reformed churches became bastions of that movement in the United States. They were joined by minority churches (Baptist, Methodist, and those independent church bodies born out of the Cane Ridge Revival) in preaching the Evangelical Gospel across the country. Many low church Episcopalians began to join in the Evangelical movement, while High Church members of the church distanced themselves from the movement and its tenets.

Millennialism, a school of biblical interpretation and theology that focuses on the

return of Christ at the end of time and his thousand-year reign, turned the minds of Evangelicals in the United States toward their perceived duty to convert the nation and the world in preparation for the imminent return of Christ. Recognizing their common beliefs and goals, Evangelicals from all denomination in the United States began to form organizations funded by voluntary contributions that concentrated on the religious conversion of the masses. Organizations like the American Bible Society and the American Home Mission Society formed a pan-Evangelical movement to place Evangelical literature in the hands of every American man, woman, and child. Evangelicals also founded Sunday Schools to ensure that all children, even the underprivileged, could learn to read. They were concerned, primarily, that children could read the Bible and Evangelical literature being provided by the pan-Evangelical voluntary organizations.

Evangelical focus on individual conversion and the personal nature of Christian faith meant that they understood the church as an invisible community of the truly faithful that could only be seen by God. Membership in a Christian denomination did not guarantee membership in the invisible church. This made it much more sensible for the faithful of the invisible church to work together across denominational divisions, as they were only human divisions. Evangelical Episcopalians shared this understanding of the invisible church. More and more, however, High Church Episcopalians began to define the church based solely on membership in a denomination governed by bishops. They believed that such a church structure was biblically based and ordained by God. Evangelical Episcopalians saw bishops as helpful to church governance, but in no way a

mark of the true church.

Through waves of conversions brought about by the pan-Evangelical organizations, Evangelicals became more and more prominent in the United States and began to enjoy increased influence in society and the political realm. What had begun as an effort to educate the multitudes in the truths of the Christian faith (as understood by Evangelicals) became a social and political movement to reform the morals of the nation. Campaigns against alcohol consumption and entertainments in the theater and the race track soon became targets of the pan-Evangelical movement.

The small Evangelical denominations also benefited from the increased popularity of the Evangelical Movement. Baptists, who had been an extreme minority denomination in the early years of the nineteenth century, saw exponential increases in membership. Methodism also experienced a surge. While seen as a success in the conversion of the nation by the overall Evangelical world, these increases began to highlight the divisions between these small denominations and the large historical Evangelical churches. As they expanded to the west in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, these smaller denominations began to see themselves as underdogs in the pan-Evangelical world. Where the Presbyterians, Congregationalists, and Reformed churches required a college educated clergy, the smaller denominations congregations were pastored by primarily untrained preachers. They also began to notice the fundamental differences between themselves and the larger denominations in the matter of baptism. The largest of the Evangelical denominations did not insist on believers' baptism, and the Baptists, in particular, began to question why they were funding Evangelical literature that did not

support their distinctive beliefs. This caused a fracture in the pan-Evangelical movement that led to even the historical denominations raising doubts about the differences between themselves and other members of the movement.

This newfound concern for denominational distinctiveness was one cause of the breakdown of the pan-Evangelical movement. Another was negative reaction in some quarters against the movement's campaigns to reform the nation's morals. There were those in the movement who did not see the need for a complete criminalization of alcohol. They pressed for a campaign of moderation rather than abstinence, but were in the minority party. Even more destructive than the issue of alcohol was the question of slavery. Many Evangelicals began to campaign for the abolition of slavery in the United States which alienated those members of the movement in the south. More than any other issue, the question of slavery broke the influence and power of Evangelicals in the United States. An issue that began as a moral one would become political in the years to come and lead to the American Civil War.

As the Evangelical Empire came to an end, the loss of influence and power led to a quest for the cause of that loss. Unable to see the internal divisions that led to the breakdown of Evangelical cooperation, many looked for some external cause. The increase in immigration in the United States, particularly from Europe, gave them the external enemy they sought. Because many of the incoming immigrants were from historically Roman Catholic areas of Europe, Evangelicals began to see the process of immigration as a slow and steady attack on the United States by papal forces. Concern for the religious identity of the nation evolved into concern for the political future. Writers

and preachers equated the increase in Roman Catholic citizens with a plot by the pope to infiltrate the electorate and the corridors of power.

This was, whether intentional or unintentional, the definition of a common enemy designed to reunite and reinvigorate the Evangelical movement. Authors like Lyman Beecher called for Evangelical Protestant funding of Evangelical Protestant institutions in the west to protect against the fundamental “dangers to our liberties” posed by the tide of “foreign emigrants...rolling in upon us.”²⁹⁷ The anti-Catholic polemic propounded by Beecher and other Evangelicals led to violent outbursts against Roman Catholic citizens and their institutions, as evidenced by the burning of the Ursuline convent in Boston in 1834. Popular anti-Catholic rhetoric blossomed into a burgeoning and profitable business. Anti-Catholic newspapers and books proliferated. Public sentiment against Roman Catholics was so enflamed that entire political movements and parties were formed whose only purpose was to eliminate any Roman Catholic involvement in government and ostracize Roman Catholics from United States citizenship.

While Evangelicals turned their eyes to the immigration of Roman Catholics, Evangelical Episcopalians began to suspect that the High Church party was actually a Roman Catholic plot in their own church. An earlier compromise between the two Episcopal parties over the mission field—that assigned domestic missionary work to the High Church party and foreign missions to the Evangelicals—led Evangelical Episcopalians to believe they were losing the vast opportunities of the west to the High Churchmen. That, and suspicion about the Oxford Movement and its *Tracts for the Times*,

²⁹⁷ Beecher, 56,

focused Evangelical Episcopalians on perceived threats within the Episcopal Church.

Evangelical Episcopalians feared that widespread sympathy for the thoughts and ideals of the *Tracts* would lead to the demise of Evangelicalism in the Episcopal Church. Despite the seventy-five year détente between the parties, Evangelicals began to insist that theirs was the only valid understanding of the church. To be fair, the rhetoric on both sides had been escalating, but no evidence can be found that the High Church party was attempting to invalidate Evangelical ideals and practices through the legislative processes of the church.

In 1844, however, alongside a very public scandal over the ordination of Arthur Carey to the diaconate in New York, and a two-pronged failed investigation of Carey's seminary, Evangelicals attempted to extirpate the "advanced" ideals of the Oxford-influenced High Churchmen. A resolution was offered to that convention requesting the House of Bishops respond to the House of Deputies "as to the nature and magnitude of the evil" that had been introduced to the church in "serious errors in doctrine and practice...emanating chiefly from members of the University of Oxford."²⁹⁸ After many attempted amendments and committee examination of the resolution, an alternative resolution was passed that said

That the House of Clerical and Lay Deputies consider the Liturgy, Offices, and Articles of the Church sufficient exponents of her sense of the

²⁹⁸ "Journal of the House of Deputies," in *Journal of the Proceedings of the Bishops, Clergy, and Laity, of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America, assembled in General Convention, held in St. Andrew's Church, in the city of Philadelphia, from October 2d, to October 22d, inclusive, in the year of our Lord 1844. With an Appendix containing the Constitution and Canons, a list of the clergy, &c.* (New York: James A. Sparks, 1845), https://www.episcopalarchives.org/sites/default/files/publications/1844_GC_Journal.pdf, (accessed July 5, 2024), 38.

essential doctrines of Holy Scripture; and that the Canons of the Church afford ample means of discipline and correction for all who depart from her Standards. And further that the General Convention is not a suitable tribunal for the trial and censure of; and that the Church is not responsible for, the errors of individuals, whether they are members of this Church or otherwise.²⁹⁹

The resolution was a kind of compromise, but also a tacit rejection of the Evangelical party's attempt to anathematize Oxford-style High Churchmanship. Their argument that the *Tracts* and their ideals led inevitably to the "Romanization" of the Episcopal Church and eventual hostile takeover of their beloved Anglicanism by the pope was also rejected. But Evangelical fears would lead to further skirmishes against high profile High Churchmen.

The suspension of Bishop Henry Onderdonk, accused by Evangelicals of drunkenness, after his admission of the fault before his diocesan convention, and the suspension of Bishop Benjamin Onderdonk after trial for both drunkenness and impurity, were seen as victories for the Evangelicals. When, however, they attempted a presentment of Bishop George Washington Doane, they failed. These presentments were the last volleys in the internecine war between High Churchmen and Evangelicals before the political and national turmoil leading up to the Civil War. Perhaps, if the nation had not devolved into war the skirmishes and battles would have continued.

These battles and skirmishes were predicated on the idea, by the Evangelicals, that Oxford High Churchmanship was attempting to de-Protestantize the Episcopal Church. High Churchmen argued that they were simply returning to the ancient

²⁹⁹ Ibid., 64-65.

understanding of the primitive church. The High Church counter-argument, however, was little helped by the secession to Rome of a number of American churchmen, including the Bishop of North Carolina Levi Stilliman Ives; the son of Bishop George Washington Doane, George Hobart Doane, (who the bishop himself had to depose from the diaconate); and a number of Arthur Carey's General Seminary compatriots.³⁰⁰ The bombshell defection was, of course, when Newman himself submitted to Rome in 1845. These seemed to prove the Evangelical position on Oxford and its writings. Many American churchmen, however, maintained both their "advanced" High Churchmanship and their Episcopal identity.

The original compromise and *détente* of 1789 seemed to foreshadow the ability of the two parties to live in harmony in the newly formed Episcopal Church. The meteoric gains of Evangelicalism in the United States in the early years of the nineteenth century catapulted the movement into the spheres of power and prestige. When, through internal divisions and dissent, that movement began to shatter, the common enemy of Roman Catholicism and "the Man of Sin" the pope, attempted to shift pan-Evangelical focus from their own deficiencies to a unifying external threat. Evangelical Episcopalians had participated in the growing influence and power of the pan-Evangelical movement, been co-rulers in the Evangelical empire, and were deeply influenced by the anti-Catholic frenzy after that empire began to crumble.

In addition to participating in the external fight against encroaching Roman Catholic immigration, Evangelical Episcopalians found a threat much closer to home and

³⁰⁰ DeMille, 65-69.

saw Oxford Divinity as a threat to their version of the Episcopal Church. Had the pan-Evangelical movement not lost its influence, it is conceivable that the internecine war between Evangelicals and High Churchmen would never have erupted. It was the rapid escalation of power, and its rapid loss, for American Evangelicals that led to the internal battles of the Episcopal Church. Witnessing the rise of prominent “advanced” High Churchmen and the consequent loss of pan-Evangelical influence in the nation, was the catalyst for the overarching fear that the anti-Reformation forces of the pope, aided by unwitting allies in the Episcopal Church, would one day “plant again the standard of the Vatican on the walls of Lambeth.”³⁰¹

³⁰¹ McIlvaine, *Oxford Divinity*, 28.

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