



Prophet, Pastor, and Patriarch: The Rhetorical Leadership of Alexander Campbell

Peter A. Verkruyse

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A study of the role of rhetoric in the exercise of leadership within a community of faith.

This book examines the rhetorical strategies employed by Alexander Campbell, a key figure in the “Stone-Campbell” or Restoration movement, which eventually comprised one of the largest religious sects in 19th century America and gave rise to three major contemporary church groups: The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the Churches of Christ, and the independent Christian Churches and Churches of Christ. Campbell was the dominant voice in this movement for four decades.

Peter Verkruyse studies Campbell’s sermons, lectures, debates, letters, and journals to discover the extent to which Campbell’s leadership depended upon his discursive practices. Through close readings, Verkruyse finds that a significant reason for the breadth and duration of Campbell’s influence was his keen sense of the demands of rhetorical situations. As his movement evolved over time, Campbell faced radically different rhetorical circumstances, and his ability to adapt his rhetoric to the exigencies and constraints of these situations generated for him an evolving leadership ethos--first as prophet, then as pastor, and finally as patriarch.

Fundamentally a study of religious rhetoric as a tool of leadership, this work also makes an important contribution to the canon of 19th century American religious history.

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