GERMAN IDEALISM IN PROTESTANT ORTHODOXY: THE MERCERSBURG MOVEMENT, 1840-1860

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DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

The Mercersburg Movement is an important phenomenon in the history of American church and theology. Its significance for liturgical and sacramental doctrine is well known; its philosophical dimension is not. Two leading historians of the Mercersburg Movement conclude that American orthodoxy informed by Scottish Realism encountered a novel romantic idealism imported from Germany by the leaders of the movement. In the ensuing clash between two epistemologies, the religious discourse is recorded and analyzed as a series of controversies over a wide range of religious and related issues, while the center of discourse remains the contest between American Scottish Realism and Mercersburg's application of German Idealism. The result is a study which concerns itself with the development of German Idealism at Mercersburg as the "orthodox" philosophical and theological alternative to the predominant American "common sense" tradition which informed Protestant religion. Moreover, the philosophical and theological informants are themselves seen as conditioned by the cultural events which they inform. Here the history of philosophical ideas is understood as a dialectic in which ideas and their institutional expressions are mutually conditioned. Thus our evaluation of the religious discourse includes the personal and political, as well as the philosophical and theological objectives which played a part in the development of nineteenth-century American religious ideas and institutions.

Abrégé de Thèse

Le Mouvement de Mercersburg représente un phénomène important dans l'histoire de l'église et de la théologie américaines. On en a bien reconnu l'importance pour la doctrine liturgique et sacramentelle, mais non sa portée philosophique. Deux des historiens les plus en vue du mouvement de Mercersburg concluent que l'orthodoxie américaine marquée par le réalisme écossais se trouva en face d'un idéalisme romantique nouveau importé d'Allemagne par les chefs du Mouvement. Dans le heurt des deux épistomologies qui s'ensuivit, le discours religieux s'enregistre et s'analyse comme une suite de controverses sur un grand nombre de questions religieusus et de sujets connexes, tandisque le centre d'intérêt du discours reste le conflit entre le réalisme américain - écossais et la mise en application par Mercesburg de l'idéalisme allemand. Il en résulte cette étude qui s'occupe du développement de l'idéalisme allemand à Mercersburg comme l'alternative "orthodoxe", à la fois philosophique et théologique, à la tradition américaine prédominante du "bon sens" qui informa le protestantisme. Du reste, on constate que ceux qui contribuèrent à la formation de la pensée philosophique et théologique furent eux-mêmes conditionnés par les événements qu'ils formèrent. Il est entendu ici que l'histoire des idées philosophiques est une dialectique dans laquelle les idées et l'expression institutionelle de ces idées se conditionnent mutuellement. Par conséquent, notre évaluation du discours religieux tient compte des objectifs personnels et politiques aussi bien que théologiques et philosophiques qui jouèrent un role dans le developpement des idees et des institutions religieuses américaines du dix-neuvième siècle.

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INTRODUCTION

There is nothing new in saying that the nineteenth-century American Protestant churches of the Calvinist stamp were using an American version of Scottish Realism to inform their orthodoxy. This has long been established by such historians as Sydney Ahlstrom.[1] Ahlstrom has also clearly established that these churches used realism to shore up the faltering Calvinist system. Nor is it new to say that the nineteenth-century system of theology at Mercersburg, Pennsylvania, known as the Mercersburg Theology, was a "romantic" movement, having its roots in German Idealism. This has been the long established thesis of James H. Nichols.[2]

What remains is to consider the nature of the contact of these religious perspectives as it occurred in the context of American religious "orthodoxy," and to test the truth of what has been previously established by subjecting it to an examination based on a review of the historical sources of Mercersburg, an analysis of the theological system and a careful reading of the literary sources of the period in question.[3]

Ahlstrom's thesis and Nichols' thesis have never been combined. Yet

[1] Sydney E. Ahlstrom, "The Scottish Philosophy and American Theology," Church History, 24 Sept. 1955, pp. 257-272.

[2] James Hastings Nichols, Romanticism in American Theology: Nevin and Schaff at Mercersburg (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961).

[3] "Orthodoxy" is the term used by Ahlstrom in referring to those Protestant denominations which were of the Calvinist stamp. Yet we must point out that Scottish Realism was also employed by the Unitarians at Harvard and elsewhere.

there is a remarkable sensitivity to Nichols' in Ahlstrom's paper on Scottish Realism. The connection between the two and the germ of the thesis for this dissertation can be found in Nichols' introduction. He writes:

> . . . Schaff and Nevin were among the earliest Americans to use the new philosophical and theological idiom of nineteenth-century Germany. The prevailing philosophy in American colleges in the 1830's and 1840's was the empiricism of John Locke, usually in the form of Scottish 'common sense.' The theology taught at Andover, Princeton, and Union was a related form of rationalistic supernaturalism. Hodge and Park, for example, wrote and taught in this pre-Kantian idiom. The Mercersburg institutions were among the first in America to champion the new German idealism, and to appropriate what Schleiermacher had given to theology.[4]

I want to affirm Nichols' thesis that Mercersburg encountered a form of "common sense" philosophy in nineteenth-century American "orthodoxy." But more than that, the regional "common sense" philosophy was informed by Scottish Realism. Nor was American Protestant orthodoxy's encounter with Mercersburg's brand of German Idealism as simple as introducing a new philosophy to America. Mercersburg was convinced that their application of the ideas found in German Idealism offered a better foundation for "orthodoxy" than any of the available epistemologies known to them.

My thesis contends that in Mercersburg's encounter with American "orthodoxy" we witness the clash of two very different philosophical and theological points of view. This clash issued in an attempt on the part of both camps to assert a perspective untenable to the other. Furthermore, we argue that the theological intention of Mercersburg was to revive the Reformed faith by means of a churchly form of German Idealism which was rejected by those who supported the reigning system of common sense realism.

[4] Nichols, Romanticism, pp. 3-4.

Historically my argument differs from the one of Nichols in its reconsideration of Mercersburg's "romantic" character such that this thesis distinguishes itself from Nichols' sound historical work in its concentration on the philosophical and theological characteristics of the Mercersburg Movement. In addition, the thesis will adjust the argument of the degree of Mercersburg's romanticism, balancing it with a fuller reading of Mercersburg's philosophical and theological methods. Finally, the thesis distinguishes itself from both Ahlstrom and Nichols in method.

While the early sources are considered and a system is historically constructed, the final chapter subjects both the system and the general conclusions made about Mercersburg to an analysis of the controversial discourse itself. Here the sermons, journals, letters, etc., are examined as a discourse about theological issues. From this point of view the theological issues are seen as a part of American religious life insofar as they are issues in the literary life of the writers and subscribers to those religious journals and magazines.

Recently articles and books have been appearing which explore Ahlstrom's question of the depth of Scottish Realism's influence in American thought in general.[5] Ahlstrom identifies John Witherspoon as the "first real ambassador" of Reid and the Scottish School.[6] Scottish Realism replaced Berkeley at Princeton under Witherspoon and by the end of the nineteenth century had firmly established itself at Harvard, Yale and Andover.

[5] Mark Noll, ed., The Princeton Theology; 1812-1921 (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1983). David Hoeveler, James Mc Cosh and the Scottish Intellectual Tradition (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981). Gary Wills, Explaining America: The 'Federalist' (New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1981).

But the Scottish Realism established in America had a distinctly regional character. In Witherspoon the "common sense" was mediated by his "Evangelical bias."[6] The tradition was continued at Princeton Seminary under Alexander and Hodge. Like Witherspoon, Alexander and Hodge grounded themselves on the Westminster Catechism and on Turretin's Institutes. Yet the philosophical strains of Locke, Reid, Stewart and Price are clearly evident in their theology. Ahlstrom writes that although Hodge fought tenaciously to keep Princeton free of anything new or foreign in theology he "himself is caught up in the anthropocentrism of Scottish Philosophy."[7]

It is Ahlstrom's thesis that the popularity of Scottish Realism was, in part, due to the support it was perceived to lend to traditional Calvinism, a theology rapidly losing ground under Enlightenment criticism.[8] Ahlstrom summarizes this point when he writes:

> The first and most obvious observation is that the leading thinkers of the American Calvinistic tradition experienced in acute terms the need for an apologetical philosophy. . . . In America the need stemmed from a concrete situation: the religious decadence of the Revolutionary epoch and the fear, felt particularly in the post-war period, that French infidelity was engulfing the universities [sic] . . . . Put in another way, the American Calvinistic tradition was suffering from a serious malaise; secular rationalism was eating away its vitals, and the tour de force accomplished by Edwards and his distinguished successors did not change the total circumstance. Consistent Calvinism, in fact, only made the great Judeo-Christian paradoxes seem more incomprehensible and uncongenial. Rational defense was required.[9]

[6] Ahlstrom, "Scottish Philosophy," p. 261. Witherspoon came from Paisley to be Princeton College's president in 1768, four years after the publication of Reid's Inquiry.

[7] Ahlstrom, "Scottish Philosophy," p. 261. Witherspoon's theology was based on the Westminster Confession and the traditional Federal Theology.

[8] Ahlstrom, "Scottish Philosophy," p. 266.

[9] Ahlstrom, "Scottish Philosophy," p. 267.

Ahlstrom concludes that the defense was supplied by Scottish Realism, the so-called "common sense" philosophy. Ahlstrom contends that one reason realism was chosen is its metaphysical dualism. Realism distinguished the world of matter from the divine world and did not seek to unite them. Ignorance of the spiritual world necessitated revelation. The material world was essentially as it was perceived by the senses. And the world beyond the senses was known only as God saw fit to reveal it.[10]

Nichols correctly places Mercersburg in the currents of the American theological scene and consequently directly within the currents of the Scottish influence. His suggestion is that Mercersburg offered an alternative to these prevailing currents. The "romantic" alternative described by Nichols was German Idealism and the theological ideas propagated by Schleiermacher.[11]

Nichols' second identification of romanticism in Mercersburg is their historical method which was brought to Mercersburg by Philip Schaff.[12]

Nichols' grouping of nineteenth-century German historical philosophy into the designation "Romantic Movement" has been a common practice among American historiographers. Our approach is to broaden this understanding by including a philosophic discussion of European influences.

[10] As we shall see, under Alexander and Hodge the Bible becomes the source of revelation, if not "the revelation" itself.

[11] Nichols, Romanticism, pp. 3-4. Nichols' thesis is that Mercersburg's "romanticism" can be understood as the introduction of biological rather than mechanical conceptions in political and ecclesiastical thought. "Organic" development yielded a different view of historical process. Yet calling this "romantic" is not all together sufficient.

[12] Nichols, Romanticism, p. 115.

Nichols sees the "romantic" influence insofar as Schaff, and later Nevin, were impressed by the ancient and medieval church. He writes, "The thought of liturgical music, the poetry of Dante, and the cathedrals raised Schaff to romantic eloquence."[13] As for Schaff, his historical preoccupation almost always was with the medieval church. Nichols sees the connection with the romantic influence in Schaff's theory of the organic nature of the development of the Church. And that Mercersburg hoped for a reconciliation of the Catholic and Protestant churches expresses for Nichols their romantic preoccupation with the future.[14]

Romanticism became the subject of Sydney Ahlstrom's sequel to his article on Scottish influence.[15] In this paper Ahlstrom describes the "remarkable longevity" of the Scottish philosophy in America and the slow progress of romanticism. He mentions briefly but inaccurately, that Nevin had introduced Hegel to America by translating Rauch's Psychology, and thereby suggests Nevin's contribution to the introduction of romanticism to America.[16] Yet he concludes his introduction to the subject by maintaining that although it has been common to describe connections which suggest romantic influence, no "consensus" exists as to the concept itself.

The article continues to consider the wide disagreement about romanticism, yet concludes with an attempt to discover the romantic Weltanschauung.

[13] Nichols, Romanticism, p. 131. The idealizing of the middle ages has been identified as a common link of certain romantic writers.

[14] Nichols, Romanticism, p. 189.

[15] Sydney Ahlstrom, "The Romantic Religious Revolution and the Dilemmas of Religious History," Church History, 46 (1977), 149-170.

[16] Ahlstrom, "Romantic," p. 152. Rauch wrote his Psychology in English and needed no translation. Nevin wrote the introduction to the second edition.

Ahlstrom dates the Romantic Movement from 1760 to 1840. Thus his conclusion harmonizes nicely with that of Nichols that Mercersburg was of the Romantic Movement. However, Ahlstrom's seminal definition of the critical character of Romanticism has only a vague similarity to the Mercersburg project. He writes of the Romantic Movement:

> Even more crucial to their undertaking was the dismantling of those rationalistic attitudes and mechanistic interpretations by which Enlightened thinkers, from Locke and Condillac to the Ideologues of Napoleon's time, were kept from understanding the moral, connative, imaginative and affective aspects of life, not to mention dreams and the subconscious, the mysterious, the occult and the mystical. No single judgment of the Romantics was so universal or vehement as their dissatisfaction with the Age of Reason.[17]

Ahlstrom fills out this critical definition with a longer, more involved description of romanticism's positive contributions to culture. Here the aspect of diversity comes forward. Indeed, the diversity is so broad as to work against a unified theory of romanticism.

Yet in Mercersburg's strong reaction to the rationalism of the "Age of Reason" and its rejection of the methods of English empiricism there emerged a distinctly American theology which benefited from a wide range of European cultural movements, one of which was certainly romanticism. It is Mercersburg's reaction to rationalism, its rejection of English empiricism and its embracing of a churchly form of German Idealism which provides the subject of this thesis.

SCOTTISH INFLUENCE

Theodore Bozeman and Mark Noll have written on the way Scottish Realism was adapted in America to shore up faltering Calvinist orthodoxy.

[17] Ahlstrom, "Romantic," p. 155.

Realism's natural advantage was its congeniality with America's scientific revolution. Biblical claims were made to sound as reasonable as the claims made about nature by inductive science and stated in a very similar way. Theological facts were supported by "evidences" from nature or experience.

Yet this realism was worked into the fabric of American religion in diverse ways. Noll is especially attuned to its influence on the popular nineteenth-century forms of evangelicalism, or revivalism. He sees Scottish Realism informing this popular movement. As we shall see, this is significant for Mercersburg's rejection of the revivalistic methods. Noll is well aware of Mercersburg's harsh treatment of "evangelical philosophy" and its concomitant rejection of the Scottish Realism of the British empirical tradition.[18]

It was John Nevin, rather than Frederick Rauch or Philip Schaff, who was educated under the influence of the British empirical tradition. Neither Rauch nor Schaff was formally schooled in realism, while Nevin, most certainly, would have taken realism for granted.[19] Nevertheless,

[18] Theodore Dwight Bozeman, Protestants in an Age of Science: The Baconian Ideal And Antebellum American Religious Thought. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1977, and Mark Noll, The Princeton Theology; 1812-1921 (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1983), p. 30.

[19] It remains an historical shadow as to who, precisely, of the English school, or even of Reid and his successors, that Nevin found useful. Yet Eliphalet Nott, at Union, certainly was one representative of Dwight's theology which had certain ties to Scottish Realism. Nevin did not study philosophy at Union and Princeton. But he was directly influenced by philosophy and the new common sense realism through his diverse reading and through the lingering influence at Princeton of Witherspoon and more directly by Alexander and Hodge. His early exposure and acceptance of the mediating influence of realism in Presbyterian orthodoxy was by way of its filtering down to the other academic disciplines and Presbyterian theology in general. The degree of realism's influence on Nevin would make an important study, but it is beyond the scope of this work.

perhaps as a student at Princeton Seminary and certainly as an instructor there, Nevin had been reading authors from an entirely different philosophical perspective. By the time he arrived at Western Seminary, which was his first seminary position outside Princeton, Nevin had encountered the Cambridge form of British Platonism as well as authors from Germany's romantic school.

Nevin is aware of the source of the Scottish tradition as having its foundations in the thought of British philosophy. He mentions Locke and Bacon acknowledging their "practical" accomplishments, but chiding them for ignoring the question of the "absolute."[20] In his early lectures at Mercersburg Seminary in 1851 Nevin distinguishes his position from that of the author of the text Nevin was using, which was John Dick's Lectures On Theology, by rejecting any argument presupposing tabula rasa which, he says, seeks to come at a subject from pure objectivity.[21]

Nichols himself, in a later article on Nevin, seeks to identify the time and nature of Nevin's departure from his native realism. Showing strong evidence for his conclusion, Nichols suggests that, after Nevin's 1829 arrival at Western Theological Seminary near Pittsburgh, his involvement with the writings of Coleridge and the British Platonists led him to the idealism of Germany.[22]

[20] John W. Nevin, "Human Freedom and A Plea for Philosophy: Two Essays," in Addresses and Essays of Schaff, Nevin and etc. (Mercersburg, Nov. 1853). Schaff's personal edition, Princeton Theological Seminary Library, n.p., n.d., pp. 34-35.

[21] John Dick, Lectures On Theology, 2 vols. (Edinburgh, 1834; rpt. Philadelphia: Edward C. Biddle, 1837). The citation is taken from William H. Erb, Dr. Nevin's Theology: Based On Manuscript Class-Room Lectures (Reading: I.M. Beaver, 1913), pp. 57-58.

[22] James H. Nichols, "John Williamson Nevin (1803-1886): Evangelical Catholicism," in Sons of the Prophets: Leaders in Protestantism from Princeton Seminary, ed. Hugh T. Kerr (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), p. 74.

Mercersburg's founding elder was Frederick Augustus Rauch. Rauch arrived in America from Germany in 1831. A year later he was heading the German Reformed Church's academy in York, Pa., and in 1836 Rauch became the first president of Mercersburg College, Mercersburg, Pa.

During the short nine years after Rauch's arrival in America he had become sufficiently, to his own mind, familiar with the American form of Scottish Realism to publish his major work, Psychology; Or, A View of the Human Soul Including Anthropology in 1840, as "the first attempt to unite German and American mental philosophy." As credits he mentions the work of Locke, Reid, Stewart, along with the German philosophers with whom he must have been more familiar.[23] But to the critics who read his book, Rauch reflected only the "transcendental pantheism" they expected from a German Hegelian.[24]

ROMANTICISM AT MERCERSBURG

Nichols was certainly not the first to suggest that Mercersburg was a romantic movement. In 1911 George W. Richards claimed that the romanticism of the eighteenth century was a European menace which brought revolutionary violence, disrespect for the state and disloyalty to the Church. At this early date Richards believed that Mercersburg rose up to oppose the growing influence of European romanticism. In this youthful work Richards displayed an incomplete understanding of the full implications of romantic thought on culture.[25] Forty-one years later, in 1952, he corrects his position,

[23] Frederick Rauch, Psychology, pp. v-vi.

[24] From New Haven the criticism came largely from the pen of Murdock. The Princeton group issued a softer rebuke.

[25] George W. Richards, "The Mercersburg Theology Historically Considered," in Papers of the American Society of Church History. 2nd ser. Vol. III. William Walker Rockwell, ed. (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1912), pp. 119-149.

broadens his definition of romanticism and argues that Mercersburg was romantic through and through.[26]

Francis Ryan wrote in support of Nichols. Ryan depends heavily on Nichols' critical edition in "triangulating" Mercersburg's place among other romantic high-church movements.[27]

Richards' quote and the work by Ryan, which dealt with John Nevin, still leave us unclear as to Dr. Schaff's romantic bias. This lacuna is supplied by Klaus Penzel and more recently by Kathryn Johnson. Johnson identifies a common mark of romantic historical work in Schaff's idea of "the entire course of world history as a unified and progressive whole."[28] Supporting this conclusion is Klaus Penzel who adds that Schaff applied his romantic theory of history in an attempt to recover the traditional Reformed faith.[29]

One of Penzel's major contributions to the study of Mercersburg is the

[26] George W. Richards, History of the Theological Seminary of the Reformed Church in the United States, 1825-1934 (Lancaster, Pa.: Rudisill and Company, Inc., 1952), pp. 274-5. "Rauch and Nevin were Romanticists, who beheld the whole order of being from the clod to the Christ as an organism, and, therefore, interpreted the universe genetically and historically, not mechanically; ethically, not forensically; objectively, not subjectively - each of these terms became household words in the exposition of the Mercersburg theology."

[27] James H. Nichols, ed., The Mercersburg Theology (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966). Francis Patrick Ryan, "John Williamson Nevin: The Concept of Church Authority, 1844-1858." Diss. Marquette University 1968, p. 35.

[28] Kathryn L. Johnson, "The Mustard Seed and the Leaven: Philip Schaff's Confident View of Christian History," Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church, 50, No. 2 (1981), p. 126.

[29] Klaus Penzel, "The Reformation Goes West: The Notion of Historical Development in the Thought of Philip Schaff," Journal of Religion, 62 (1982), pp. 230-1.

connection drawn between Schaff and Schelling. In an article on Schelling's vision of the Church of the future he warns the reader of Schelling's intensely romantic and idealistic concepts which control his hermeneutic.[30] Less originally, Penzel identified Schaff's dependence on the romantic approach of Schleiermacher, but argues that Schelling is the real source of Schaff's "ecumenical vision" of a unified Church.[31]

In 1978 Nathan Mitchell completed a dissertation which disputed Nichols' conclusion that Mercersburg should be seen as a romantic movement. Mitchell thinks it is a "mistake" to see the nineteenth-century liturgical reforms or high-church movements as simply romantic. Such a designation "frequently blurs the real differences between men and movements in the nineteenth century."[32] Mitchell's method is to show that Mercersburg was a traditionalist movement in which Nevin and Schaff and their liturgically minded students sought to recover the lost theology and tradition of the German Reformed Church. He writes that Mercersburg was not simply a romantic movement, but rather they were philosophers of "mediation" who were in search of a "new hermeneutic that would permit them to take both the emerging historical consciousness and the Christian tradition with full seriousness."[33]

[30] Klaus Penzel, "A Nineteenth-Century Ecumenical Vision: F.W.J. Schelling," Lutheran Quarterly, 18 (1966), pp. 366-7.

[31] Klaus Penzel, "Church History and the Ecumenical Quest: A Study of the German Background and Thought of Philip Schaff," Diss. Union Theological Seminary 1962, pp. 218-19.

[32] Nathan Mitchell, "Church, Eucharist, and Liturgical Reform at Mercersburg: 1843-1857," Diss. Notre Dame 1978, p. 7.

[33] Mitchell, "Church," p. 194.

Nevertheless, the weight of consensus rests with those who trace Mercersburg's romantic source directly back to Schleiermacher. But even here caution is suggested. Certainly there are those who consider Schleiermacher thoroughly romantic. But others are less sure. In a study of Schleiermacher's romantic involvement, Jack Forstman has argued that it is not wrong to see Schleiermacher as a romantic, but it is not completely helpful either. It was Schlegel who coined the term "romantic" as it was applied to the new movement in which Schleiermacher participated. Yet the two soon went their separate ways. By the time Schleiermacher had published his Speeches he had reversed the romantic agenda of perceiving a reality beyond this world and instead sought an hermeneutic which would enable a scientist to perceive the infinite in the finite.[34]

Finally, Robert Clemmer tried to find a connection between the transcendentalism of the Mercersburg Movement and the transcendentalism of New England. Unfortunately he concludes that there was really nothing similar between New England and Mercersburg except that they were American versions of a western European phenomenon of the nineteenth century. That phenomenon was "the movement from empiricism to idealism and from the Enlightenment to romanticism."[35]

From Mercersburg's own perspective it would have been difficult to see the full implications of romanticism on culture. They did not think of themselves as romantic. Nevertheless, in an address to the Goethean Society

[34] Jack Forstman, A Romantic Triangle: Schleiermacher and Early German Romanticism, AAR Studies in Religion, 13 (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1977), pp. 115-19.

[35] Robert Clemmer, "Historical Transcendentalism in Pennsylvania," Journal of the History of Ideas, 30 (1969), p. 579.

of Marshall College, August 1846, Schaff quotes Hegel in giving heroic poetry and Dante's Divina Commedia [sic] high honors. He rejects the epithet "Dark" for an age filled with illumination; and he praises Dante for representing the acme of Catholic influence and historical importance.[36]

Nevin also displayed an historic interest in the medieval church and with Schaff recognized its organic connection with the modern church. Furthermore, he affirmed the existence of the invisible world which we are able to experience through faith in the "mystical presence" of the real Christ of history.[37] Their often sweeping historical generalizations, their fascination with the ancient and medieval church, their liturgical interest and their interest in supernatural phenomena all suggest some romantic influence.

Those who address the issue of Mercersburg's romanticism usually consider how they treat the question of the history of the Church. It is here that the connection with the Oxford Movement is often made. John Woolverton draws just such a connection in his impressive study of Nevin's controversy with the Episcopal church. He sees Mercersburg and Oxford as romantic, holding to a theory of the essential union or unity of the Church.[38]

[36] Philip Schaff, "The Divina Commedia," in Addresses and Essays of Schaff, Nevin and etc., (Mercersburg, Nov. 1853). Schaff's personal edition, Princeton Theological Seminary Library, n.p., n.d.

[37] John W. Nevin, The Mystical Presence: A Vindication of the Reformed or Calvinistic Doctrine of the Holy Eucharist (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott & Co., 1846).

[38] John F. Woolverton, "Nineteenth-Century Ecclesiology: J.W. Nevin and the Episcopalians." Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church, 49, No. 4 (1980), p. 367.

Yet Schaff was usually critical of the Oxford Movement. After visiting E.B. Pusey in Oxford, Schaff wrote that Puseyism was misguided in its "romantic" longing for a return to the Church's ancient past. Pusey identifies a golden age in church history, yet, says Schaff, he does not have a scientific and organic understanding of the Church's development. Instead he interprets history in a way that suits his and his party's particular interest. Schaff was primarily concerned with an understanding of the Church's past for what it could tell us about the Church of the present and the way it could lead us to think about the Church of the future. In this he distinguishes himself from romanticism.[39]

A similar confusion exists with Nevin even before his meeting Schaff and before the development of his historical theory. At the period Nevin was in Princeton romanticism would have been a vague concept. Nevertheless, the Yale scholar John Nelson identifies romanticism in Princeton's influential teacher Archibald Alexander.

Nelson demonstrates how in spite of Alexander's external defense of Christianity, he placed final weight on the ultimacy of "internal evidence."[40] It was in the "romanticist immediacy" where the individual experiences the "divine power."[41]

[39] Philipp Schaf, "Zwölf Tage in Oxford," in Addresses and Essays by Schaff, Nevin and etc. (Mercersburg, Nov. 1853). Schaff's personal edition, Princeton Theological Seminary Library, n.p., n.d., p. 229.

[40] John Oliver Nelson, "The Rise of Princeton Theology," Diss. Yale University 1935, pp. 251-252.

[41] Nelson, "Rise," pp. 270-4. Nelson seems to be using "romantic" as synonomous with "intuition." It is possible Turretin was used for lack of a better text. This use of "romanticism" is quite different from the one in use by Nichols and most other scholars. We cite it only to suggest romanticism's fascination with immediate experience.

Yet the age of the supremacy of "an intuition fundamentally Romantic" would only span the period of Alexander's tenure, which was about 1830, when it was replaced by the "Victorian" Age.[42] Still this regional adaptation of the growing influence of romanticism must have made some impression on Nevin. But it certainly would not have been romanticism's concept of history but rather its emphasis on intuitive insight.

As far as the Mercersburg group understood it, the issue was not where they stood with regard to romanticism, but where they stood in relation to the "new" German Idealism. In Nevin's "Introduction to Schaff's Principle of Protestantism" he suggests that the modern theoretical dispute is between "the Anglo-American order of religious life" and the German religious life. Each, he says, contains elements of the truth and elements of falsity. In true dialectical style his appeal is for a third view which comes from a "union" of the two, taking their best parts. "Realism and Idealism, practice and theory, are both, separately taken, unsound and untrue."[43]

Nevertheless, says Nevin, idealism offers the best alternative for keeping pace with the onward development of human thought. Germany has had to respond to wholesale defection from the faith, a defection Nevin believed was now gripping America. In the crisis of such a challenge Germany developed the theology to be represented by Schaff and Nevin in America.[44] In this way Schaff and Nevin continued the program of Rauch to "unite" German and American thought.

[42] Nelson, "Rise," p. 274 and 302.

[43] John W. Nevin, "Introduction to Schaff's The Principle of Protestantism, in Philip Schaff, The Principle of Protestantism (Chambersburg: Publication Office of the German Reformed Church, 1845), p. 7.

[44] John W. Nevin, "Introduction," p. 8.

CHAPTER ONE - CULTURAL BACKGROUND

The purpose of our first chapter is to establish Mercersburg's religious and philosophical cultural foundation. The chapter depends primarily on secondary source material to establish a German and American context which, however general, will provide a broad outline of the philosophical, theological and religious forces which influenced Mercersburg's thinking and its reaction to its cultural setting.

We depend on the secondary sources in these sections, which extend beyond the specific and original sources used in this work, in order that the issue of Mercersburg's reaction to American common sense realism can be viewed within the fuller context of the history of American religion. In addition, our general account will provide the reader with guidelines for determining the source of many of Mercersburg's most important ideas by describing the cultural situation which the Mercersburg writers felt compelled to respond to.

PRUSSIA AT THE TURN OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

In this section we depend primarily on Schaff's reminiscences of the development of German Protestant religion as he described it and as it has been reported by scholars who have written on Schaff's German background. Also we are indebted to the valuable work of Robert M. Bigler, The Politics of German Protestantism: The Rise of the Protestant Church Elite in Prussia 1814-1848. Their accounts provide us with a description of the dominant Prussian theological and political movements and how they influenced

Mercersburg.

Prior to 1740 pietism had dominated Prussia's religious establishment at the political level, in the universities and in the parishes. After 1740 rationalism replaced pietism as the dominant theological movement in Prussia. At the turn of the century rationalism was seriously challenged by romanticism as well as by the idealistic phenomenologies of Hegel, Schleiermacher and others. Hegel's idealism briefly held the favored position in the state's orthodoxy, but Neo-Pietism, with its conservative reaction to the French Revolution and with the support of the state, steadily rose to dominate Prussian orthodoxy by 1845.

It was during the rise of the Neo-Pietist party that Rauch and Schaff studied at university.[45] Several of Neo-Pietism's leaders had a direct influence on Schaff and an indirect influence on Nevin (through Schaff and published works).

Simultaneously a reaction devehowever developed in Prussia, and elsewhere, against the so-called "excesses" of Neo-Pietism and rationalism. It developed from within the idealist camp primarily among students of Schleiermacher. Because this movement sought to mediate between traditionalism and German Idealism the school became known as the Mediating school of theology. Members of this school included teachers and friends of Schaff who had a primary influence on his thought. In addition, several of those who counted themselves among the Mediating school were considered by Nevin to be the foremost theologians of the day. The combination of influences of the

[45] Neo-Pietism is also called "dogmatic ecclesiasticism" by Massey and defined as "a hybrid of orthodoxy and Pietism." It was formed "when a revival of the emphasis on adherence to traditional Lutheran dogmas as the mark of authentic Christian faith was coupled with the Pietist stress on the inner relationship of the believer to Christ, a relationship found in the heart, not the mind." Marilyn C. Massey. Christ Unmasked: The Meaning of "The Life of Jesus" in German Politics. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1983, p. 44.

Mediating school, in terms of philosophy and theology, and Neo-Pietism, in terms of ecclesiology, liturgy and sacramental theology, became the dominant German influences on Mercersburg.

Schaff believed Germany's religious development after the Reformation was a series of historical reactions. The first reaction was to Lutheran and Reformed scholasticism which had developed soon after the Reformation. The dry and unemotional scholastic theology evolved a character in which Scripture was treated as a totem of infallible power. Schaff had adopted the Mediating school's position (probably from Neander) that this character developed from the Reformation's introduction of the importance of Scripture as the "formal principle" of Christianity. Yet this principle had been balanced by the Reformers with the first principle of Christianity which is the principle of Christ's real and active presence in his Church. Schaff believed the Reformation had recovered Christianity's first principle, which was called the "material principle," and likewise re-established the importance of Scripture which had been lost during the Middle Ages. Thus the Reformation had stressed the balance between the material and formal principles of Christianity. Yet scholasticism produced an imbalance by overemphasizing the formal principle. The natural reaction to a religion which stressed doctrine to the point of the loss of religious feeling was a religion of personal and inward faith. Thus the earliest forms of pietism rose to denounce the "outward intellect" and to affirm the personal character of religious knowledge.[46]

King Frederick II was ruler of Prussia in 1740 when pietism declined in the wake of growing rationalism. Schaff believed that pietism's emphasis

[46] Schaff, Principle, pp. 98-9.

on personal religion issued in a total decentralization of confessional orthodoxy and with it a complete loss of the Protestant church's theological identity. With "feeling" being the sole arbiter of religious truth, no objective source could be appealed to to decide theological matters. The sense of disunity and the need to express philosophical and theological convictions in an objective manner, led to the adoption of rational categories in philosophy and theology.[47]

Rationalism dominated the religious institutions of Prussia up until the beginning of the nineteenth century, and even then most of the Prussian clergy remained rationalists well into the nineteenth century. But the center of regional religious influence and power was shifting from the parishes to the universities. Protests were growing over the perceived excesses of the French Revolution, which was often associated with the cause of rationalism. And conservative religious revivals were becoming common among both Protestants and Roman Catholics in Prussia.[48]

The generally negative reaction to rationalism along with the rise of conservatism and nationalism was effectively used by the Prussian monarchy to unite Lutheran and Reformed churches around a single liturgy in 1814. By 1817 the union was completed in the Prussian Evangelical Christian Church. Yet while the union brought together the two dominant religious bodies in Prussia it also served to strengthen the growing Neo-Pietist

[47] Schaff, Principle, p. 100. Says Schaff, thus in Kant, a system of morality was fused to an intense spirit of practical piety. Untethered, rationalism soon lost its need for even moral defense and became a god unto itself in the speculative "desolation" of the Hegelian left.

[48] Robert M. Bigler, The Politics of German Protestantism: The Rise of the Protestant Church Elite in Prussia 1814-1848 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), pp. 46-47 & 78.

movement.

Clubs organized by Prussian nobility and the wealthy had as one of their chief intentions the promotion of nationalism and conservative, confessional orthodoxy. In some cases club members were also leaders of the Neo-Pietist movement. Two such members were the noble-born von Gerlach brothers.[49]

Ludwig von Gerlach's close relationship with the crown made him the perfect choice to solidify Neo-Pietism's political influence. Otto von Gerlach exerted his influence as a professor at Wittenberg and as court preacher in Berlin.

But the most influential as well as controversial leader of the Neo-Pietist party was E.W. Hengstenberg. Hengstenberg was a self-declared crusader against liberalism and rationalism. By 1820 his conservative, Neo-Pietist party had gained control of the state-run church. His maneuvering helped win Olshausen the theological chair at Konigsberg, Otto von Gerlach's position in Berlin (against the express wishes of Schleiermacher) and Tholuck the theological chair in Halle, where rationalism had dominated.

Hengstenberg's main literary vehicle was the Evangelische Kirchen-Zeitung which was popular among German-speaking Protestants in America as well as among Protestants in Prussia. His hatred of rationalism suited the conservative tastes of many in America. But Hengstenberg did not satisfy himself with merely waging war against the rationalists. Bigler writes:

> In 1823, Hengstenberg now declared that "philology, philosophy, and human reason could not penetrate matters of religion." He thus voiced

[49] Bigler, Politics, p. 127.

the Neo-Pietist and orthodox position, which rejected not only rationalism but also the philosophical approaches of the schools of Schleiermacher and Hegel to theological problems.[50]

With Tholuck at Halle, Hengstenberg's party virtually eliminated the rationalist's opposition by 1845. Hengstenberg was able to isolate Hegel's influence at Berlin, and the "liberal" uprisings in Königsberg were effectively contained by the pressure applied by the party and the state.

Hengstenberg's influence also extended to America. An example of this is the call issued by the German Reformed Church to one of Hengstenberg's supporters, the influencial Rhineland-Westphalia preacher F.W. Krummacher. Bigler quotes Krummacher as having "assured Hengstenberg of the support of the 'true believers' and declared that Hengstenberg was performing a crucial role in the 'struggle for the kingdom of God . . . on earth.'"[51]

Neo-Pietism replaced Hegelianism as the favored religious party of the Prussian government's ecclesiastical affairs minister after 1815. Schaff himself was in Berlin to see the loss of the Hegelian influence within the government and he watched with interest as a middle position between traditionalism and German Idealism was outlined by the philosophers and theologians of mediation.[52]

[50] Bigler, Politics, p. 92.

[51] Bigler, Politics, p. 105. Krummacher was called to the chair of church history at Mercersburg Seminary by the GRC. He recommended Schaff.

[52] Schaff's familiarity with the issues included intimate knowledge of Hegel's own personal religious feelings. Schaff was a guest of Mrs. Tholuck who was the niece of Mrs. Hegel, whom Schaff had visited on several occasions. Mrs. Hegel had been disturbed by "infidel developments" in the left wing of Hegelian philosophy, especially Strauss and his book The Life of Jesus. "She assured me that her husband was a good Christian, and would have abhorred such a work. She often tried, she said, to prevail upon him to go with her to Gossner's church in Berlin, but he would excuse himself with the remark, 'My dear child, thinking is also worship.'" In, David Schaff, The Life of Philip Schaff (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1897), pp. 30-31.

In 1826 Tholuck, whom Schaff greatly admired, gained a position at the rationalist stronghold in Halle. At the welcome banquet, "In contrast to Schleiermacher, who was icily cold and almost hostile toward Tholuck . . . the philosopher Hegel urged his young colleague to do his best to bring an end to the influence of rationalism at Halle."[53]

It was Strauss' Life of Jesus, published in 1853, that set off a major political and theological controversy in Germany. Strauss created such a storm that the right wing of the Hegelian school found itself cast into the role of defending itself from rationalism on the one hand and explaining its orthodox position over against the claims of the left wing on the other. Even Schaff cast them in a similar light. Instead of criticizing the left wing and distinguishing it from the school of the right, he writes that the contributions of Hegel, which "successfully ridiculed common or vulgar rationalism . . . " ultimately "relapsed" into rationalism's "still greater absurdities" in the "infidel wing" of the left.[54]

Members of the "infidel wing," including Strauss, F.C. Baur (Schaff's professor at Tübingen), Feuerbach and others, were criticized by the right wing for having ruined the relationship established by the new idealists with the state by directly attacking the state in the name of Hegel's dialectical philosophy. This political "radicalism," along with their unorthodox views of Christianity, made them a primary target of the Hengstenberg party.

By 1799 Schleiermacher had been censored by the Prussian government. His insistence that the state not control Prussian orthodoxy lost him

[53] Bigler, Politics, pp. 100-101.

[54] Philip Schaff, The Person of Christ: The Perfection of His Humanity Viewed as a Proof of His Divinity, 12th ed. (New York: American Tract Society, 1882), p. 166.

support among his wealthy followers. Before 1816 the von Gerlachs and other wealthy German families attended the services conducted by Schleiermacher. But after 1816 they became active in churches run by the "older" pietistic ministers. In the "Awakening," after 1820, Schleiermacher lost many of his "revived" members, including his own wife, to Neo-Pietist churches. The pietists openly denounced Schleiermacher for his "search for eternal truths instead of a simple acceptance of the orthodox dogmas . . . ."[55]

Yet in spite of strong criticism from the conservative movement Schleiermacher had a lasting impact on a diversified and highly skilled group of church historians, philosophers and theologians, many of whom came under the general heading of "liberals." Marked by a basic acceptance of Schleiermacher's (and Hegel's) insights, scholars like Nitzsch, Rothe, Daub and Neander gained recognition independently of their mentors who had fallen out of favor with the state.[56]

The Mediating theologians were not so much a party as a school of

[55] Bigler, Politics, p. 128-32. We include here a brief note to establish Nevin's position in the matter of rationalism and Schleiermacher's role in defending orthodoxy. Charles Hodge considered Nevin an American disciple of Schleiermacher. Yet Nevin clearly distinguishes himself from both Schleiermacher and Hegel. Nevin respected Schleiermacher for his courage in defending Christianity against the rationalists. Nevin wrote, "He [Schleiermacher] stood in the bosom of a generation, which he found wholly destitute of faith in Christianity. Penetrated himself with the persuasion of its divine character, he sought to enforce its claims to rational respect, in the face of the learned and polite infidelity with which he was surrounded." In, John W. Nevin, Antichrist: Or the Spirit of Sect and Schism (New York: John S. Taylor, 1848), p. 46. Nevin credits Schleiermacher with assisting in Germany's Christian regeneration. However, Nevin is quick to add that Schleiermacher's theology had been effectively eclipsed by the advances of his students, few of whom "occupy his own ground." Nevin contends that they have rightly abandoned his misguided philosophy. The students Nevin refers to are the Mediating philosophers and theologians.

[56] Bigler, Politics, pp. 131-32.

thought concerned with mediating a path between traditionalism and German Idealism. More specifically, they maintained the authenticity and authority of Scripture, but their approach to Scripture applied scientific and historical principles in Scripture's interpretation. Furthermore they understood the hermeneutical project according to a philosophic idealism which maintained that the idea or spirit of history develops itself in a dialectical manner.

Certainly one of the most important figures for Mercersburg among the Mediating theologians was August Neander. Neander had tried to maintain the balance between rationalism and pietism at Halle. Yet because of the ruthless attacks of Hengstenberg against rationalism he, "publicly disassociated himself" from Hengstenberg's position.[57]

In spite of Mercersburg's criticism of certain characteristics of the Mediating theology, the most important of which was their "low" view of the church, it was this school of thought which represents the form of German Idealism appropriated by the Mercersburg theologians.

AMERICA FROM 1800

In this section we continue the general account of Mercersburg's cultural background. Although we offer a brief outline of Protestant America's Eastern religious establishment around 1800, it is specifically

[57] Bigler, Politics, p. 121. Neander was Schaff's teacher at Berlin and Nevin claimed it was Neander who woke him from his "dogmatic slumbers." In, John W. Nevin, My Own Life, Papers of the Eastern Chapter, Historical Society of the Evangelical and Reformed Church, No. 1 (Lancaster, Pennsylvania, 1964), p. 143. Nevin complained that Princeton had not provided him with a satisfactory concept of church history. He writes that, "There was in truth no science in it; and its associations could hardly be called sacred, as they certainly also were not edifying in any way"(p. 137). Neander provided the Lebenszusammenhang to Nevin's concept of church history.

American Presbyterian "orthodoxy," as marshalled by Charles Hodge at Princeton, which represents common sense realism's challenge to the type of German Idealism taught at Mercersburg. Yet the clash of religious or theological systems in New Jersey and Pennsylvania is quite unlike the religious competition we described in the previous section on Prussia. America did not centralize religious authority in its colleges and seminaries. Furthermore, America's direction in the practice of religion was distinct since religious authority or power could not be centralized in its political institutions. Each denomination was relatively free to develop its own constitution and base of financial support. The source of this distinction is America's unique separation of church and state.

Unlike the Prussian union church, whose existence depended on the state, American denominations had no state support and depended on the voluntary support of their members. Thus popular religious ideas and movements constituted the significant source of religious and theological development because of the support they generated in members and money.

As in Prussia, a religious movement called the "Awakening" emerged in America bringing with it the American religious phenomenon called "revivalism." The first awakening began around 1734 and is generally associated with Jonathan Edwards. By 1740 the "Great Awakening" spread throughout New England and the Eastern Seaboard. In 1800 a second awakening flourished in the South, East and parts of the West. But unlike the Neo-Pietist awakening in Prussia the American awakenings, which began around the time of Edwards, had little interest in the question of the Church. Edwards preached the awareness of personal sin and saw his consistent Calvinism as the orthodox response to Arminianism.

Edwards' theology blended his Westminster Calvinism with a moral

theology which emphasized the personal conviction of sin, conversion, and individual moral responsibility. The influence of this system of theology, which became known as the New England theology, was enormous. Through the revivals which sprang up in the East, the New England theology permeated virtually every stronghold of Protestant orthodoxy including Congregational, Lutheran, Reformed and Presbyterian.

Edwards' reworking of his Westminster tradition, which added a novel brand of moral philosophy, had a direct source in the philosophical writings of John Locke, whom Edwards read as a student at Yale. Edwards' theology, joined with Locke's moral philosophy, became a bedrock of New England orthodoxy. As such, "Puritan" Calvinism came to think in terms of expressing its ethical convictions from an empiricist standpoint. Experience was thought to provide individuals with a natural understanding of universal moral laws. Locke had supplied nineteenth-century American Calvinism with the concept of an individual "moral sense" which, in the theology of Edwards and his New England followers, was nevertheless utterly permeated with sin. Yet it was upon this "moral sense" that the newly arrived Scottish Realism developed its answer to Hume, that individuals were capable of understanding and responding to an essentially moral universe.

At the turn of the century Scottish Realism was coming to dominate American moral philosophy and Edwards' New England theology was fading. The great theological stronghold of Edwards and Locke at Yale was modifying its theological outlook in the direction of Paley and natural theology. Under the leadership of Timothy Dwight common sense realism became the foundation of Yale's moral philosophy. At Harvard the Unitarian movement was taking control and receiving its philosophical stimulus from the moral

philosophers, Reid and Stewart. At King's College (Columbia) the Berkeleyan stronghold of Samuel Johnson, common sense realism replaced Berkeley. At Andover Seminary, the last New England bastion of Edwards and Locke's undisputed dominance over theology and philosophy, Amsa Parks (1836) was adjusting his theology according to the teachings of Reid and Stewart. Yet before all others, it was Princeton, under John Witherspoon (1768), which pioneered the cause of American common sense realism by adapting it to the Westminster tradition. Witherspoon replaced the pervading Berkeleyian philosophy at Princeton with his own reading of Reid and Stewart.

In each of the above cases, Scottish Realism was introduced to give support to existing systems of theology. At Yale it supported the "old Calvinism" of Dwight and smoothed over the scholastic dogmas of providence and election which seemed to contradict the discoveries being made in the natural sciences. The emphasis on sin remained, but there emerged the idea that ours is an essentially law-abiding universe which provided human beings with a universal ethic. At Harvard the Unitarians developed the moral sense into the capacity of individuals to do good such that all people are endowed with the quality of basic human goodness. At Columbia the empirical sciences were seen to give support to the existence of a "real" universe, not the philosophical shadows of Berkeley's "immaterialism." At Andover and Princeton the ailing New England theology was felt to be in need of shoring up by what had come to be seen as the eminently practical and orthodox teachings of Reid and Stewart.

As a philosophical support for Princeton's Westminster theology, common sense realism remained in the background and was never directly attacked by Mercersburg as one might expect. Like the inheritors of Witherspoon's tradition, Alexander and Hodge, Mercersburg seemed only

vaguely aware of the infiltration of modern Scottish Realism into the American Protestant tradition.

Realism provided Presbyterian Calvinism with an incredibly popular practical outlook on life. The development of the frontier required a certain rugged individualism that took the world "as it is," so to speak. But more importantly, Hodge's Princeton was intent on resisting the changes it saw in New England and Europe. The new movements in religion all required an adjustment in the way the world had been perceived. For Alexander and Hodge common sense realism seemed to represent the conservative conviction that the world as our fathers perceived it is pretty much the way the world is, at least morally and religiously.

But even within Presbyterian orthodoxy change forced its way. In 1837 the Presbyterians were split between the "Old School" and the "New School." Although the division was as much, if not more, over denominational administration as doctrine, doctrine and ecclesiology were at stake. The "Old School" resisted the overemphasis of revivals. It balked at reducing the confessional doctrines according to a "simple and straightforward reading of Scripture." And it remained committed to a lofty respect for the office of minister of the Word.

Not only Presbyterians faced a future of change. The German Reformed Church found itself adjusting to its inevitable English-speaking future. In spite of massive German immigration the GRC leadership had become essentially American. Like the Presbyterian Church the GRC had elements of revivalism, pietism and traditionalism. And each perceived itself to be a bastion against rationalism, liberalism and Catholicism. They were joined in this conservative reaction by the Dutch Reformed, the Lutherans, the Methodists, the Baptists and the traditional Congregationalists. Yet in

spite of their conservatism the Presbyterians and the GRC experienced internal tensions as to how far to take revivalism.

Alexander and Hodge were "Old School." In spite of the influence of revivalism and biblicism on their thinking, they saw Princeton as the last American defender of the Westminster faith. This meant a war on two fronts. First, the front against rationalism and liberalism. Second, the front against excessive revivalism. The philosophical tool of Princeton's war was common sense realism.

Nevin arrived at Mercersburg an "Old Schooler." As much as Alexander and Hodge he was the product of revivalist influences. He too was reared on Westminster. And he was prepared to ally the seminary at Mercersburg with Princeton on both of the fronts of evangelical Protestantism's war with rationalism and revivalism. But for the sake of Heidelberg and Rauch, and perhaps some early personal misgivings about Princeton's philosophical foundation, he chose the tool of German Idealism instead of Scottish Realism and from that moment became the lifelong antagonist of Charles Hodge.

Princeton equated German Idealism with German rationalism. In 1839 J.W. Alexander and A.B. Dod wrote an article which summarized Princeton's philosophical position and the stand it would take against German Idealism.

They sadly admit that since the death of Brown (1820) metaphysics in England has been at a standstill. But even before Brown, indeed since the passing of Locke, the "Scotch School" has reflected a sectarian bias and a generally skeptical character. Without a positive impetus it now finds itself struggling to survive against transcendentalism.

Yet they feel that America has until recently been spared this history. Established in the philosophy of Locke, American metaphysics

received from Jonathan Edwards, "the greatest of modern Christian metaphysicians," the New England Calvinism which itself is now come under fire.[58] New England, under the "false leadership" of Hopkins, Taylor, and Dwight, has taken on the influences of the deist Paley, along with a myriad of heresies including Arminianism and transcendentalism.

They go on to lament that no great American philosopher equal to the task has risen to establish a "higher" metaphysical foundation. And so they find themselves at the mercy of the Germans and worse, of the mimics of Germany, the French. (Here they refer to Cousin.)

The article continues to warn against the influence of German learning, suggesting that French and English transcendentalism, of which the latter is identified with "the gifted but indolent Coleridge," is merely a sifting of German thought. Their position mocks German Idealism as being too esoteric for American minds.[59]

Their conclusion is that in transcendentalism "the initiated are incited to an esoteric vision of truth, a Gnosis which the common herd cannot attain . . . " which results in their "contempt" for "experimental, or empirical philosophy." They write:

> As there are certain limits to intellectual powers, which the immortal Locke endeavored to ascertain, and beyond which we float in the region of midnight, so those who have forgotten these cautions have in their most original speculations only reproduced the delirium of other times, which in the cycle of opinion has come back upon us "like a phantasma or a hideous dream."[60]

[58] James W. Alexander and A.B. Dod, "Transcendentalism," rev. of Elements of Psychology, including a Critical Examination of Locke's Essay on the Human Understanding, with Additional Pieces and Introduction to the History of Philosophy by Victor Cousin and "An Address delivered before the Senior Class in Divinity College, Cambridge" by Ralph Waldo Emerson, Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review, 11 (1839), p. 38.

[59] Alexander and Dod, "Transcendentalism," p. 43.

[60] Alexander and Dod, "Transcendentalism," p. 88.

OXFORD

An important historical question which continues to divide those who study Mercersburg is the question of the influence on Mercersburg of the Oxford high-church movement and English philosophy in general.

It is commonly known, for example, that when Nevin was at Western Seminary near Pittsburgh he read one of the Tractarian movement's pamphlets. At Western he also enjoyed reading Coleridge and other English romantic poets. It is also apparent he read both Newman and Pusey. Schaff as well read the English poets and had met with Pusey in Oxford before coming to America. But the question of the direct influence on Mercersburg by Oxford continues to divide those who see Coleridge and Oxford making an important contribution to Mercersburg and those who see little other than a passing interest stimulated by the coincidence of similar ecclesiastical goals.

The former group see not only Nevin and Schaff's early contact with Oxford (Nevin at Western and Schaff before coming to America), but they note as well the identical interest Mercersburg took in the general question of the Church and, ultimately, their liturgical contribution, which represents the "highest" liturgy in the history of the Reformed Churches. Furthermore, as Mitchell has recently argued, Mercersburg's philosophical quest was for a modern theological language capable of making defensible statements about the unseen world of faith. In this they see Mercersburg duplicating Coleridge's project.[61]

In addition, those who share this position find in Nevin more than a passing interest in Oxford. In consideration of Nevin's protracted debate with the Episcopalian Bishop Coxe, John F. Woolverton suggests that by

[61] Mitchell, "Church."

raising the question of the Church and its essential unity, Oxford made a key contribution to Mercersburg even if Nevin criticised Coxe's position.[62] And in a recent doctoral seminar at New Brunswick Theological Seminary on the history of the nineteenth-century liturgical movement (under Professor Horton Davies), Drew University Liturgical Program, Spring 1985, the seminar divided over whether or not it was Coleridge who provided Mercersburg's philosophical foundation (with Oxford and Puseyism providing Mercersburg's romantic high-church inclination).

The second group disagrees. They argue that Mercersburg had all it needed in order to develop its philosophical base, as well as its churchly theology, in its German heritage.

Philosophically, they contend that Coleridge had his best ideas from Germany and that Schaff and Nevin read the German romantic poets as well as the English poets. Furthermore, the quest for a reasonable expression of the Christian faith within the limits of experience and rational science was a project begun by Germans, especially Kant, and later the romantics, Schleiermacher, Schelling and Hegel, to name a few. Theologically, they argue that Germany provided all but the Scottish and Lockean influence, which had by then become part of the American theological tradition. And ecclesiastically, they observe that Schaff remained actively interested in the Church of Prussia, seeking that the church remain confessional and strong on piety. In all, why would Mercersburg, whose life and ministry emanated from the German Reformed Church in America, borrow ideas from an entirely alien source?

[62] Woolverton, "Ecclesiology."

Finally the disagreement boils down to the former group's position that in spite of Mercersburg's minimizing of the influence of Oxford in their writings, Oxford was the primary source of Mercersburg's creedal theology. With regard to Nevin's strong sense of the importance of the Apostles' Creed there can be no doubt of the influence of Oxford and Anglicanism. Yet any argument which makes Oxford or Coleridge the first source of Mercersburg's philosophic and theological ideas is in direct conflict with the movement's own testimony.

The earliest connection between England's high-church movement and Mercersburg can be traced to the Prussian King Frederick William IV. King William was favorably disposed to England's well organized church system. He shared the sentiments of Oxford's reaction to liberalism, their interest in Catholic ritual and their emphasis on traditional doctrine. It was his intention to establish an ecclesiastical tie between England and the Union Church of Prussia. He went so far as to send an ambassador to England, but the negotiations proved unsuccessful.[63]

Although the Tractarian movement, which put Oxford into its controversial position, contained some conservative, pietistic strains and interest in traditional dogma as was common with the von Gerlachs' aristocratic high-church position, the Oxonian question was not that of the necessary unity of the one Catholic and Apostolic Church, but the issue of the clerical office as it was interpreted by their own version of apostolic succession.[64] This became a source of fundamental disagreement between Oxford and Mercersburg. Nevertheless, Mercersburg praised their

[63] Nichols, Romanticism, p. 80.

[64] Nichols, Romanticism, p. 78.

popularization of the Church issue and their high view of the sacraments.

Apparently neither Schaff nor Nevin found enough that was unique in the Oxford movement for useful application in their American context. Whenever confronted with the issue of Oxford, Mercersburg consistently refers to Germany as the source of a better reaction to sectarian, liberal or rationalistic influences. Yet for Nevin, as he openly admits, when it comes to Mercersburg's use of the Creed as the foundation for sound Christian practice and belief ". . . our theology is more Anglican than German."[65]

THE TRADITION OF HEGEL AND SCHLEIERMACHER

The next section treats Mercersburg's cultural background by delving into the original source of Mercersburg's philosophical and systematically theological ideas. Neither Rauch, Schaff nor Nevin studied with either Schleiermacher or Hegel. Yet that these two are the primary indirect source of Mercersburg's philosophical Weltanschauung is attested to by virtually all of the secondary literature. Here we seek, in again a general way, to describe briefly the outline of Hegel and Schleiermacher's philosophic projects where those projects were crucial for the philosophic and theological foundations of Mercersburg. In addition we shall describe where, in the differences between Schleiermacher and Hegel, Mercersburg identified with one against the other.

The central contribution of this stage of German Idealism to Mercersburg is the development of a religious language that could

[65] John W. Nevin, "Our Relations to Germany," Mercersburg Review, 14 (1867), p. 632.

reasonably express Christianity as a faith in which God participates in human history.

Philosophy, in the form of deism in England and France, and Kantian moral philosophy in Germany, had found itself, in the mind of Hegel and Schleiermacher (with Mercersburg concurring), in a culture without a real experience of God. Even those theologians, who were referred to by Hegel and Schleiermacher (and later by Mercersburg) as "supernaturalistic rationalists," argued for a belief in God and the biblical witness without scientific evidence. They, like the agnostic rationalists and atheists, agreed that God is neither visible nor immanent in the world. The rationalistic theists would go only so far as to say that God exists transcendentally.

Hegel and Schleiermacher openly attacked the philosophic base of this position (mostly Kantian) and replaced its Cartesian epistemology with a phenomenology of Spirit, often described as the identity philosophy (Identität). The identity philosophy was the philosophic source of Mercersburg's critique of American common sense realism and the philosophic parent of Mercersburg's historical and theological positions.

However, while Mercersburg shared the philosophical and theological project of describing God's participation in human history by means of the identity philosophy, they were not restrained by the methodological inconsistencies that their evangelically motivated deviations from identity philosophy produced. Instead of being primarily concerned with the logical consistency of their method, they simply borrowed from German idealism the ideas they considered fruitful, and those ideas which they felt gave the best expression to a contemporary orthodox evangelical faith. So, when Mercersburg found the logical or systematically consistent course taken by

Hegel or Schleiermacher deviating from the dogma of orthodox Protestantism, they simply rejected the philosopher's conclusions. Thus Mercersburg rejected both Schleiermacher's philosophic position of religion as essentially "a feeling of dependence" and Hegel's philosophic position that religion reaches it highest stage in speculative philosophy.[66]

In contrast to the methodological approaches of Hegel and Schleiermacher, Mercersburg would be influenced by the Mediating school of theologians who held that only by beginning with a Christology in which Christ's person is made the cornerstone of theology can a philosopher develop a correct understanding of Truth. Rauch, Nevin and Schaff believed, against Hegel, that reason or mind, which represents the consciousness of history's self-direction, was not identical to God. There remained a great barrier between the Absolute and mankind. Sin prevented the unity of the two. Yet in a mystical experience, which Nevin (more than Rauch and Schaff) came to believe derived mainly from the Church's sacrament of Holy Communion, Christ and the believer shared in Christ's humanity and thus participated in the divinity. In this the individual bridged the gap between finite and infinite. Mercersburg believed that in the relationship between Christ and believer, as constituted in the 'two' sacraments of the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, the problem of God's involvement in human history was solved.

From the moment Nevin and Schaff were united at the seminary in Mercersburg they mounted an all-out campaign to end the influence of what

[66] It is impossible to say how well Rauch, Nevin and Schaff knew the complex systems of Hegel and Schleiermacher. It appears that Rauch knew Hegel quite well and the fact that Schaff lectured on Schleiermacher at Berlin indicates his familiarity with the theologian. Nevin read German but the German of the German idealist philosophers is convoluted and difficult. Even today wide disagreement exists as to the best reading of their texts.

they called "supernaturalistic rationalism" in the Protestant Christian faith in America. Supernaturalistic rationalism maintained a transcendent deity whose existence was outside of human experience. In this, the battle begun in Germany by Hegel and Schleiermacher and continued with a new emphasis by the Mediating theologians, was brought to America by Mercersburg.

It was Hegel, along with Schelling and Schleiermacher among others, who, in reaction to the tradition of Kant and the pervasive rationalistic approach to philosophy and theology taken in Germany, built a system of philosophy whereby God was identified with the world. Yet to prevent God's being made finite by associating him with the objects in the world, Hegel and Schleiermacher developed systems of philosophy which completely redefined the categories of existence. Finitude became limited being, such that it could be identified, and infinitude became unlimited being, such that it was unidentified (not particular) yet capable of becoming identified by limiting itself (thus becoming particular). Likewise the human qualities of necessity and freedom were experiences of finitude and infinitude.

In the identity philosophy a dialectical polarity of finitude and infinitude is established for every object of experience. Thus every object has both qualities of finitude and infinitude, necessity and freedom, body and soul. In God one recognizes infinity as absolute, unconditioned freedom, becoming finite as particular conditioned necessity in human history. (The religious depiction of this for Hegel is the incarnation of Jesus Christ). Mankind equally contains the poles of finite and infinite existence as particular conditioned necessity becoming infinite as absolute unconditioned freedom in thinking. (Hegel depicted this religiously as the

sacrament of Eucharist where the individual eats and drinks God and thus has union with God in Jesus Christ.)

Schleiermacher and Hegel developed remarkably similar lines of thought, considering the animosity they felt for each other. Both stood in the tradition of Kant where epistemology demanded a transcendent object for knowledge. Both turned against their tradition believing that human experience could provide a starting point for a phenomenology based on will or reason.

The crucial distinction between Hegel and Schleiermacher falls on the nature of will and reason. For Schleiermacher the will, as the cause and effect of practical life, "felt" itself as such. Thus the feeling of self-determination implies the feeling of dependence on another as the ground of all experience. The freedom of knowing one's experience implies the knowledge that one is not the ultimate cause of all experience. Hence one "feels" a certain dependence on the "other." This, for Schleiermacher, is the primordial religious experience; the feeling of utter dependence.

Hegel never made the emotion of felt dependence the source of religious consciousness. He rejected any suggestion of a non-cognitive theology which is supported by the argument of human inability to know God in a rational manner. Robert Brown has written:

> Hegel contends that the theology of feeling strips God of objectivity and autonomy as a reality existing in-and-for itself. In what may be a premonition of Feuerbach, he says its outcome will be materialism and atheism.[67]

In spite of a basic similarity in method and historical understanding Hegel and Schleiermacher battled as academic rivals at the University of

[67] Robert F. Brown, "Hegel's Lectures On the Philosophy of Religion: A Progress Report On the New Edition," Owl of Minerva, 14, No. 3 (1983), p. 6.

Berlin. An essential source of Hegel's attack on Schleiermacher is the same criticism leveled by Mercersburg; his rooting of religion in subjective experience. Yet while Nevin's criticism balances Schleiermacher's subjectivity with what Nevin believes is the objective quality of Church doctrine, Hegel's critique is fundamentally philosophical and would see Nevin's position as dogmatically unphilosophical and fundamentally superstitious. But even in the more abstract critique by Hegel, Schleiermacher's subjectivity is characterized as never really coming to expresssion in a social form or institution.[68]

Hegel and Schleiermacher were also at political odds. One source of their political animosity appears to be Schleiermacher's insistence that the Church be independent of the state and occupied exclusively with humanity's ultimate redemption (the position adapted to an American context by Mercersburg). Hegel insisted that the Church is an organ of the state used by the state to produce the same redemption. For Protestant America, by the 1830's, a united Church and state was inconceivable. And Hegel's insistence of the "ideal" Church coming to real expression in this moment of history suggested to Mercersburg Hegel's complete identification of the "divine Church" with its historical manifestation. Mercersburg, either ignorant of the inner logic of Hegel's position, or unwilling to sacrifice their Reformed concept of the Church (which maintains a Church which is in part invisible) chose to side neither with Hegel's objective philosophy of church history nor with Schleiermacher's so-called "subjective view," but rather with the historical theory of the last stage of Schelling's philosophy of history. (Schelling's concept of church history is to be

[68] This is reflected in Schleiermacher's insistence that the Church remain indepepdent of the state and his low-church stand. The essentially subjective quality of religion requires individual expression unhampered by politics and free from institutional forms.

considered in the section on historical theory.)

However, between Hegel and Schleiermacher, at this level, Mercersburg stood closer to Schleiermacher and his description of God's participation in human history. Both Schleiermacher and Mercersburg avoided Hegel's attempt to conceptualize what to them remained a mystery. Crouter quotes Schleiermacher:

> All real philosophy consists only in the insight that this inexpressible truth of the highest essence lies at the basis of all our thinking experience, and the development of this insight is itself that very thing which, according to my conviction, Plato construed as Dialectic. I don't believe we can get further than this (Bolli:119).[69]

Like Schleiermacher, Mercersburg avoided the conceptualizing of "this inexpressible truth of the highest essence." Yet they would not leave the experience of the mystery beyond human participation. Mercersburg held that the mystery itself could be experienced if not completely understood in the Sacrament of Holy Communion.

Schleiermacher maintains that reason is for dividing and disecting experience. Immediate consciousness or feeling, on the other hand, seeks to unify experience. Hegel would not permit such a dichotomy. Schleiermacher's theoretical implications, in Hegel's mind, produced a definition of dogmatics which seemed to grant historically conditioned truth to the prevalent doctrine of the time. Hegel would not allow "truth" such a relative quality. Perhaps unjustifiably, Hegel understood Schleiermacher only with regard to this subjective relativism.[70]

[69] Richard Crouter, "Hegel and Schleiermacher at Berlin: A Many Sided Debate," Journal of the American Academy of Religion, 48, No. 1, p. 24.

[70] Crouter, "Hegel," p. 38.

In spite of their differences the philosophers were involved in the battle against rationalism which they believed required the reconciliation of faith and reason. They inherited from their culture the issue and the language in which the issue would be considered. Equally Mercersburg was compelled to resolve what was being called the irreparable breach of reason and faith. As inheritors of the question, as well as the heirs of what would constitute reasonable methods for resolving the conflict of faith and reason, it appears from the distance of time that they never seriously doubted that faith was in fact in danger of being lost to rationalism. Nor did they doubt that certain quarters of society were in a position to see to it that rationalism replaced the Christian religion as the source of ultimate truth. From the evidence at their disposal they believed this was what was happening to Western civilization and that it was quite possible for society to confuse itself about the direction that God intends for it to go. Yet in spite of Hegel and Schleiermacher and Mercersburg's fear for the future of Western Christianity and their shared solution which centered on the perception of the divinity's participation in human history, they ultimately disagreed as to how to understand that participation.

MERCERSBURG IN THE IDEALIST TRADITION

Like their German idealistic teachers, Mercersburg entered the philosophic question of the breach between faith and reason from the starting point of self-consciousness. And the position they adopted is similar to that of Hegel and Schleiermacher. Yet they did not systematically build a critical understanding of human psychology based upon self-consciousness. Rather, they simply asserted the principles inherited from the Mediating school's "orthodox" adjustment of German Idealism. For Mercersburg, philosophy remained a tool of theology. Its function was to

transform the thinking of the world to the evangelical faith which Mercersburg believed desperately needed to be brought up to date by the identity phenomenology.[71]

Rauch, who was the most philosophical of the three, began with abstract reason as it exists in mankind as self-consciousness. Yet in the Psychology he understands reason as self-consciousness as if it were a self-evident fact needing no defense. He then asks, "What is thinking?" He differentiates reason from the activity of the senses and from conception. Both of these activities are aspects of individual intellect. Reason, as activity, generalizes. Reason forms the unity of particulars into the collective whole which is not merely the sum of the parts. As activity it is the active unity or unifying agent of all things. Rauch writes:

> The generality which is here spoken of, is not gained by abstraction, but by position; it is not the product of man, nor that of any object, it is neither subjective nor objective, but above both; its origin is pure reason, as such. It exists not merely in our thoughts, but equally as much in nature; it is in the sphere of nature the genus; in the sphere of mind the identity, and in that of science the generality. As such it would remain abstract, did it not become concrete by its own innate power, which entering into a difference becomes through it concrete in the individual. Hence the genus in nature divides itself, and enters the species, and through it realizes itself in the individual.[72]

In one sense, Rauch treats abstract reason as "above" and outside of human individuality. Nor is it the effect of all thinking individuals, since its effect is prior to nature as well as in nature. For Rauch, reason is the ground of divinity's contact with nature and with mankind.

[71] Rauch was both the most philosophically rigorous and the most Hegelian of the Mercersburg Movement. Still, he came by his Hegel through the philosopher of mediation Karl Daub. Rauch's short life prevented Hegel's philosophic domination of Mercersburg. Rauch's loyal student, E.V. Gerhart worked to make Rauch's theology more influencial in the GRC.

[72] Rauch, Psychology, p. 277.

At this point Rauch began Mercersburg's modification of Hegel's position. In another work Rauch identifies abstract reason with a particular content. He implies that abstract reason has a natural inclination toward Christianity such that reason, as the mind of God, presents itself as the concept of the incarnation. Rauch's Hegelian Christology maintained that self-consciousness was the awakening of abstract mind to its fulfillment in a Christian individual.[73]

The least disputable distinction that can be shown between Hegel and Schleiermacher and Mercersburg, one that will not cause serious question, is that unlike Hegel and Schleiermacher, Mercersburg gave little consideration to philosophy as such. Where Hegel and Schleiermacher would discuss abstract reason for pages without the hint of God or Christ (although they would eventually come to these topics in time), Mercersburg could not speak long on any topic without theology and the practical questions of the Reformed ministry and the Church being everywhere evident.[74] This is less true of Rauch's Psychology than of the rest of Mercersburg's work. Yet in Rauch, as well as in Schaff and Nevin, the discussion of philosophy is always in preparation to present the evangelical faith.

The Psychology represents the least persuasive example of this.

[73] Frederick A. Rauch, "Faith and Reason," a sermon published in the Mercersburg Review, 8 (1856), pp. 80-94. Some contemporary Hegelians who are among Hegel's followers of the "right" might want to argue that Rauch's position here is precisely Hegel's. Nevin also begins here. And although Schaff never discusses these topics himself, he never contradicts Nevin and in fact, consistently endorses his position.

[74] For example, in Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit he refrains from dealing with the question of "Religion in General" until the end of his book. And in Schleiermacher's Christian Faith, in his section on the "Conception of the Church: Propositions Taken From Ethics," his discussion abstracts the forms of consciousness in a highly technical and philosophically complex way.

Indeed, it was criticised for being a wholly un-Christian book. It concludes its introduction by showing that man's distinction from the animal is human self-consciousness. Yet Rauch begins the first chapter by describing nature's distinctions as "the laws which the Creator has given to the earth." The Psychology continues this pattern throughout, showing itself to be as much apology as philosophical science.

Rauch's premature death leaves us unclear as to the full expression of his philosophy. As Nevin became more emphatic about the Church's role as the divine institution established on earth by God, he modified Rauch's starting point. Without eschewing mental philosophy and his early position on self-consciousness, Nevin replaced Rauch's philosophical starting point with a confessional and ecclesiastical starting point.

Based on his later experiences, especially his reading of St. Cyprian, Nevin became convinced that a "state of grace" developed historically in the Christian Church alone. It had begun with the teaching and ongoing presence of Christ. Within this state there also developed through the orthodox creeds, confessions and philosophic responses to the Church's shared experience, the incomplete yet best description of human understanding possible. Nevin began to argue that the inward nature of baptised Christians was unique; that supernatural experience represented pure thought differently than the experience which reasoned outside of the Church or in an un-churchly, rationalistic manner. Thus Nevin would ultimately limit "reason" and "feeling" as first principles to religious knowledge and replace them with creed and confession. He would ultimately contend that all "real" knowledge begins with the state of grace provided by the mystical union of a believer with the actual life of Christ. Schaff would never publically refute Nevin's position, but neither would he argue

as vehemently for the equal importance of the visible over against the invisible Church.

Mercersburg believed that the German idealistic tradition of Hegel and Schleiermacher was a devoutly Christian tradition. Its errors derived from rationalism's long domination of Germany's religious life. In their suspicion of rationalism's misguided attempt to understand God's involvement in human history, they, without a completely clear philosophical justification, sided with the Neo-Pietists in Prussia and insisted on certain orthodox dogmatic principles which they supported without recourse to rational defense.[75] They simply said these were matters of faith and not reason.

Perhaps Mercersburg's American perspective enabled it to criticize Hegel and Schleiermacher within the Prussian historical setting as intellectuals out of a thoroughly German Protestant setting. Mercersburg recognized German Idealism's re-emphasis of the "material principle" of the Reformation over rationalism's formalism. Yet at the same time they regarded Hegel's giving complete dominance to the Spirit as evidence of latent rationalism. Nevin criticised Hegel for not completely ridding himself of rationalism's requirement that the experience of the divine be mediated by the mind's apprehension of spirit. In extreme cases such rationalism would lead to a denial of all experience of the divine as having no objective base. For Hegel, philosophy discovers the Spirit's role in reason's self-understanding. The Protestant presupposition here, argued

[75]. We say "without a completely clear philosophical justification" because although Nevin did articulate a philosophical position, he did not address the system developed by Hegel or Schleiermacher and instead took only those principles he considered valid without regard to how the philosophical principles are systematically interdependent within the respective system.

Mercersburg, was that the divine life is accessible to the individual only as it is mediated by the Spirit. The battle for diminishing the Spirit's role in mediating Christ would be fought by Mercersburg on American soil. Again, their rationale was the critique of latent rationalism's avoidance of supernatural phenomena. To overemphasize the Spirit's role in mankind's participation in the life of God suggested to them a lack of courage, a buckling under to the pressure of rationalism's account of reason and human experience, as well as a wandering from traditional Reformed, Lutheran and catholic doctrine. Mercersburg maintained that the individual's participation in the divine is a direct, supernatural and unmediated participation in the humanity of Christ. But it is a phenomenon only possible within the fellowship of the Apostolic Church.

Here Mercersburg, without addressing the German Idealist tradition directly, levelled a criticism to any theology which leads in the direction of the personal interpretation of revelation (even if it is argued that one is constructing a philosophical approach based on reason and not a theology). They maintained that the Reformation's "material principle" had historically led Europeans to embrace a new formalism.[76] Whether it be by stressing one's own personal interpretation of Scripture or one's own personal interpretation of reality, it is "unorthodox" to interpret or supersede the Church's confessional tradition individually. For Mercersburg, the growing Protestant sects as well as the eighteenth-century rationalistic philosophies, were nothing other than the natural development of Protestantism's confusion over the material principle. The response of Mercersburg, following the teaching of the Mediating theologians, yet going

[76] The idea that the Reformation had ultimately produced a new formalism came to Mercersburg directly from the Mediating school.

beyond them in their understanding of a creedally unified Church, argued that the excessive emphasis of the spirit's illumination of the individual soul has led the Protestant church away from sound catholic doctrine.

It can be clearly seen throughout Mercersburg's philosophical and historical work, as well as in their theological position, that in spite of Mercersburg's criticisms of Hegel and Schleiermacher, they had been greatly influenced by their concepts of christology and historical development. Hegel's lectures on the philosophy of religion, for example, demonstrate both Hegel's treatment of the Reformation's use of the material principle and his emphasis on the christological problem.[77] Equally, Schleiermacher's Christian Faith provides a source in which the tradition of the Christian Church is described as an historical development and in which the christological principle is emphasized.[78]

The tradition of Hegel and Schleiermacher, which survived in the Mediating school and was further adapted by Mercersburg, included the concepts of the rational development of history and the centrality of the christological principle. Where Mercersburg departed from this tradition is on the same crucial issue which taxed philosophy and theology; how the divine is present in the world.

Hegel's reconciliation of faith and reason depended on the reconciliation of classical dualism's spiritual and material worlds. Mercersburg would retain the dualism which they believed was sustained by the effect of human sin. The ontological reality of sin made it necessary for God's activity in the material world to be a completely supernatural

[77] James Yerkes, The Christology of Hegel (Missoula, Mont., 1978; rpt. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983), pp. 125-6.

[78] Friedrich Schleiermacher, The Christian Faith (Edinburg: F & F Clark, 1928).

act. The disagreement of Hegel and Mercersburg here is demonstrated in their distinctive doctrines of the Eucharist.

Hegel's position is that any lingering dualism, no matter how "orthodox," cannot stand. Reality, ideal or material, is not to be divided into two ontologically opposed realms. Religious symbolism and language must seek the negation of false dualism by moving from the figurative thinking of cultic ritual to the "full consciousness of the Absolute." It is the "idea" of Christ as the indwelling of the divine in human experience that is behind the sensuous symbol of eating and drinking at Eucharist.[79]

Mercersburg would not completely unify spiritual and sensual experience in the philosophical idea. As with the classical dualism of medieval Christianity, Mercersburg believed that participation in the divine life of God was possible only in the state of grace which had its center in the Eucharist where Christ is actually present during the celebration. But unlike medieval catholic doctrine they taught that Christ's presence was not in the physical elements themselves. Here they stand in the Reformed tradition with John Calvin.

Both Hegel and Mercersburg maintained the real, objective presence of Christ. But Hegel identifies its beneficial effect in the "idea" (Begriff) of indwelling divinity. Christ's presence exists as mediated by Spirit. Mercersburg argues that the beneficial effect of the Eucharist exists in the actual impartation by Christ of his humanity as well as his divinity to the believer. Christ is present in the rite as he becomes present in the individuals who eat and drink his body and blood. (A fuller presentation of Mercersburg's doctrine of the Eucharist will be provided later in this

[79] Lawrence S. Stepelevich, "Hegel and the Lutheran Eucharist," (Hegel Section, AAR Convention, New York, Dec. 1982), pp. 2 & 14-22.

work.)

Theologically, the doctrinal source of Schleiermacher and Hegel's disagreement with Mercersburg exists in their incompatible doctrines of sin. Hegel and Schleiermacher tended to agree with the Platonic notion of sin as moral failure which stemmed from ignorance of the good. Schleiermacher felt that sin occurs when people depend on worldly objects which do not constitute ultimate value but only relative dependence. Hegel, similarly, could not believe in the ontological existence of evil. Mercersburg, following Augustine and Calvin, considered sin to be an ontological reality which exists, among other places, deep within each human soul.

Again, unlike their American contemporaries whose criticism of Hegel and Schleiermacher accused them of "pantheism," Nevin and Schaff's criticism centers on the accusation of latent rationalism which led the philosophers away from the "old confessional Protestant tradition." Ultimately Nevin and Schaff would turn to Schelling in his later "theistic" period, as the most acceptable contributor of a properly scientific and orthodox philosophy of religion.[80]

FREDERICK A. RAUCH'S PHILOSOPHIC DEVELOPMENT

In approaching Rauch's philosophic development the most controversial questions have been the degree to which Rauch subscribed to the philosophy of Hegel, and the general influence of Hegel on Mercersburg because of Rauch.

For years the first question appeared to have been answered by Howard

[80] Philip Schaff, rev. of The Vocabulary of Philosophy, Mental, Moral, and Metaphysical, by William Fleming, Mercersburg Review, 13 (1861), pp. 159-60.

Ziegler. Ziegler's book, Frederick Augustus Rauch, American Hegelian, described how Rauch's Psychology reproduced the third part of Hegel's system. But recently, Loyd Easton has argued in Hegel's First American Followers: The Ohio Hegelians, that Rauch was an Hegelian only in a nominal sense. His conclusion is that Rauch did not share Hegel's concept of religion.

Certainly Rauch was an Hegelian philosophically, but in his evangelical faith he shared both Nevin and Schaff's orthodox confessionalism. At this point the second question is addressed. Rauch was a theologian influenced by the Hegelian philosopher of mediation, Karl Daub. As such he represented to Nevin a gifted and progressive evangelical theologian who, armed with the insights of German Idealism, could address the contemporary challenges of rationalism. It was Rauch who established Mercersburg's philosophic base in the German Idealism of the Mediating school of philosophers and theologians.

Rauch was born in 1806, the son of a Reformed minister, in Frankfurt am Main. He was educated at the Gymnasium at Büdingen and matriculated at the University of Giessen. He took his doctorate in philology from Marburg in 1827, and set off to begin a lectureship at Heidelberg. In Heidelberg he met Karl Daub who would instruct him in Hegel's philosophy.

Reportedly, before he came to Heidelberg Rauch had shed the religious latitudinarianism which was common in Germany at that time.[81]

[81] John W. Nevin, "Eulogy on the Life and Character of Dr. Rauch," in Addresses and Essays of Schaff, Nevin and etc. (Mercersburg, Nov. 1853). Schaff's personal edition, Princeton Theological Seminary Library, n.p., n.d., and John W. Nevin, "Eulogy on Doctor Rauch, Mercersburg Review, 11 (1859), p. 451.

Yet Rauch was extremely ambitious and anxious to begin his academic career. In his zeal to become a lecturer he embroiled himself in a legal controversy with one of his professors. He was advised that a successful academic career in Germany was unlikely. Thus Rauch came to America hoping for a fresh start.[82]

Rauch was never officially a student of Daub, but undoubtedly he was in close contact with him during the period in which Daub wrestled with the controversial problem of reconciling philosophy and theology.[83]

When Rauch was with Daub at Heidelberg Daub was an Hegelian. (Hegel had entrusted Daub with the correcting and revising of the second edition of his Enzyclopädie, 1827.)

[82] Howard J.B. Ziegler, Frederick Augustus Rauch, American Hegelian (Lancaster, Pa.: Franklin and Marshall College, 1953), p. 17. Ziegler cleared up a confusion which misrepresented Rauch's professional status in Germany and his reason for leaving. As early as 1834 Rauch was erroneously called a "professor" at Giessen in H. Bokum's introduction to Frederick Rauch's "German Neology," Messenger of the German Reformed Church, 3 (New Series), No. 11 (1834) and again erroneously called a professor "extraordinary" at Heidelberg, who was forced to leave Germany because of political comments he made against the government, in Nevin's "Eulogy on the Life and Character of Dr. Rauch" and his "Eulogy on Doctor Rauch," pp. 450-52. Nevin repeats his first error that same year in his introduction to the posthumous second edition of Rauch's Psychology, 1841, p. vii. The errors of reporting appear again in Theodore Appel's Recollections of College Life at Marshall College, Mercersburg, Pennsylvania, from 1839-1845 (Reading, Pa.: Daniel Miller, Printer and Publisher, 1886), p. 210. The errors are again repeated in Henry Klein's, A Century of Education at Mercersburg, 1836-1936 (Lancaster, Pa.: Lancaster Press, Inc., 1936), pp. 89 & 91. Much later, Theodore Trost commits the same error (in spite of Ziegler's book) in his "Philip Schaff's Concept of the Church, with special reference to his role in the Mercersburg Movement," Diss. University of Edinburgh 1858, p. 63. Nichols benefited from Ziegler's work and corrects the error in Romanticism, p. 47 and Patrick Ryan follows suit, attributing Rauch's hasty departure from Germany to his self-alienation of the academic community, in "Nevin," p. 61.

[83] Nevin, "Eulogy on the Life and Character of Dr. Rauch," p. 4. Here Nevin praises Daub over Schleiermacher who was not able to keep philosophy distinct from theology. Yet Nevin condemns the rationalism which was latent in Hegel's philosophy.

Rauch shared Daub's dependence on Hegel and, although incorporating Daub's sense of Christian piety, he definitely reflected the philosophy of Hegel.

Taking some exception to this is Loyd D. Easton. Although Rauch is an early source of Hegel's thought in America, whose Hegelianism "was only narrowly removed from its source . . . " nevertheless, "his book was not overtly an exposition or defense of Hegel's views."[84]

Easton defends his position by maintaining that Rauch is integrating German and English philosophy, not simply reproducing Hegel's system. His insight is in taking seriously Rauch's own stated intention which was to integrate German Idealism with the dominant philosophy which he found in America. However, Ziegler has clearly shown that Rauch's philosophical orientation is Hegelian. Yet Easton points out that Rauch did depart from Hegel on the question of religion. He writes:

> Rauch did not follow Hegel on the difference between truth in religion and philosophy - namely, that in the former truth takes the form of 'imaginative presentation' . . . .[85]

Furthermore, Easton maintains that Rauch did not share Hegel's pattern whereby "reason moves through opposition and conflict from an incomplete position toward greater unity and wholeness." Easton concludes that Rauch was not an "enthusiastic Hegelian."[86]

[84] Loyd D. Easton, Hegel's First American Followers: The Ohio Hegelians (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1966), p. 9.

[85] Easton, Hegel, p. 11.

[86] Easton, Hegel, p. 12. Easton might be pressing this point too hard. Hegel himself did not always maintain his triadic tidiness. Even the less Hegelian Schaff and Nevin held to Hegel's theory whereby history synthesizes itself through dialectical conflict. Where Mercersburg seems to differ from Hegel is the degree of fundamental change which historical development brings to the institutions of change.

Where Easton is certainly right is in his observation that Rauch distanced himself from Hegel on the issue of religion. Easton has also clarified the fact that Rauch and his colleague at Mercersburg understood the Psychology to be an original work, insofar as Rauch did integrate his German Idealism with the Scottish informed realism prevalent in American theology. But it is important to state that Rauch's work is Hegelian, and that it deals only in the most limited sense with American theology.

Unlike Hegel, Rauch was a churchman who, like Nevin and Schaff, sustained a Reformed position with regard to the difference between philosophy and religion. At the same time, Rauch felt that there was no necessary disagreement between faith and reason. He was familiar enough with Stewart to quote him and well acquainted enough with Hegel to paraphrase creatively one of Hegel's most famous illustrations.[87] (Certainly this is not to imply a thorough knowledge of Stewart, but only that he knew of him and was able to quote him.)

Although Rauch did not live to publish his moral philosophy, Nevin had enough of Rauch's notes in hand to continue his classroom lectures. Thus one of Rauch's important contributions to the Mercersburg Movement was his setting it on its idealistic course. Three years before Nevin arrived at the seminary, Rauch had been presenting Hegel's idealism and many of Germany's romantic idealistic ideas to his students. As Nichols points out, this would have been in contrast to the "old common-sense empiricism"

[87]Rauch, Psychology, pp. 243 & 246. The latter refers to Hegel's concept of philosophy's limitations in the illustration of the nocturnal vision of Minerva's owl in the concluding section of the introduction to Naturrecht und Staatswissenschaft im Grundrisse: Grundlinien der Philosophy des Rechts, 1821.

taught by Rauch's colleague, Lewis Mayer.[88]

After Rauch's illness Nevin took over his responsibilities. Ultimately Nevin would write the foreword to the second edition of Rauch's Psychology and it appears that he used Rauch's notes when he assumed his course in ethics after Rauch's death.

Finally, as a postscript to the philosophic influences on Rauch, unlike Schaff and Nevin, Rauch never subscribed to the philosophy of Schelling. In opposition to the work by Schiedt, Ziegler has demonstrated that Rauch was not a Schellingian.[89]

JOHN W. NEVIN'S PHILOSOPHIC DEVELOPMENT

As with the previous section on Rauch, here we attempt to establish the general account of the influences pertaining to John W. Nevin's philosophical development. We are especially indebted to Theodore Appel, K. Plummer, and James Nichols for piecing together what we have of Nevin's early intellectual development. In addition Nevin contributed a brief autobiographical sketch in My Own Life. However its specificity in describing Nevin's theological departure from puritan theology unfortunately limits its breadth of application.

Because of the stark changes in Nevin's theological position, as compared to Rauch and Schaff, we face the challenge of explaining the causes which brought Nevin from his confessional Scotch-Irish

[88] Nichols, Romanticism, pp. 46-7. As an important aside, it is here that Nichols cites evidence that Nevin and Rauch "never discussed religion intimately."

[89] Ziegler, Rauch, p. xi. C. Schiedt, "Rauch's Dogmatic Theology - From the Standpoint of Schelling," Bulletin of the Theological Seminary of the Evangelical and Reformed Church in the United States, 16, No. 3 (1845), pp. 113-23.

Presbyterianism to his evangelical and Reformed catholicity. Yet the available data are only slightly greater than what we have for Rauch and Schaff. Thus many of the important questions of why Nevin moved from one position to another are left to our conjecture based on conclusions drawn from the primary and secondary source material.[90]

However, admitting some loose ends which must remain without the hard facts to connect them, the general outline of Nevin's philosophical development can be pieced together.

Nevin was born to a conservative Scotch-Irish Presbyterian family. His early religious education was centered in the Westminster tradition of catechetical instruction. Upon entering college however, he encountered a system of theology which was unlike the one in which he had been nurtured. The New England theology of Edwards had become modified by the philosophical influence of common sense realism and by the practical influence of revivalistic techniques. At Union College Nevin's "churchly" Presbyterianism was challenged by the influence of revivalism and he experienced a "conversion" along with the puritan style "soul-searching" and introspection. Nevin's "soul-searching" continued and was indeed encouraged by his professor Archibald Alexander when Nevin entered seminary at Princeton, New Jersey.

[90] For example, in Romanticism In American Theology, p. 60 Nichols draws a connection between Nevin and a theologian of mediation by suggesting that Nevin took from Olshausen (and Sartorius) the idea of the second Adam. Thus Nevin had access to Mediating thought as early as 1844 and probably earlier. Yet, before Nevin met Schaff, we can only speculate that his knowledge of the German Mediating theology was imperfect and that what he did know had come to him through Rauch and through the critical eyes of American visitors to Germany. Again, in Nevin's "Human Freedom," 1849, he uses something quite similar to Hegel's identity philosophy to critique Kant's "Categorical Imperative." But we cannot say for sure where he got his understanding of Hegel, the depth or quality of that understanding, nor can we say whether he read Kant's second critique or merely meant to criticise Kant's major premise with regard to moral law.

At Princeton Nevin acquired the Princeton theology which considered itself the last defender of the tradition of Edwards and the American stronghold of the "old" Scotch Presbyterianism of Calvin and Westminster.[91] Princeton also believed itself to be a fortress against rationalism and romantic transcendentalism, preferring instead the philosophical insights of common sense realism. In spite of that Nevin believed that the theology he found himself practicing at Princeton was heavily influenced by German rational theology.

The source of this influence came directly from Nevin's study of the Old Testament. The field of Old and New Testament interpretation was becoming dominated by the German inspired critical approach pioneered at Tübingen. Tübingen's hermeneutics depended on a scientific objectivity which carried with it a theological predisposition toward Scripture which was rationalistic (at least in Nevin's later opinion).

Nevin's involvement in the field of biblical literature led him to challenge his puritan theology with the theological views and values of the German rational theology. Only his thoroughgoing evangelical background and the reading of his favorite puritan divines kept him from becoming more committed to the rationalist's approach. In addition, once at Western Seminary near Pittsburgh, Nevin became interested in the romantic poets and writers and with the historical theories and research of the German idealists. It was at Western that Nevin began to reconsider seriously his

[91] Princeton in the 1840's would have defended its theology in the "Old School" tradition. By this time the "Old Light" vrs. "New Light" controversy had long passed with the enormous influence of Edwards and New England's revival theology. In spite of the fact that Nevin saw his early development as being "old" and traditional, it is impossible that Nevin's early experience was from the "Old Light" tradition. Nevertheless, Nevin believed that the Presbyterian system in which he was raised was more churchly and conservative than the one he found at Princeton.

Westminster Calvinism and the Princeton theology.

In 1840, after eleven years at Western Seminary, Nevin became professor of theology at Mercersburg Theological Seminary. It was there that he met Rauch and received from him the encouragement to pursue German Idealism and the Mediating theology. Rauch certainly would have encouraged his investigation of Hegel and Schleiermacher and he may have adjusted the influence of Princeton's understanding of German Idealism. Rauch would have also led him to seek reconciliation between the German and English philosophies of mind and ethics.

By 1849 Nevin was secure enough in German idealistic philosophy to criticise both Kant's rational philosophy and American common sense realism by means of post-Kantian German Idealism. And he applies this philosophy in the criticism of American Calvinism's decreetal theology and what he considers to be Calvin's antiquated psychology.

Certainly Nevin's understanding of German Idealism was initially directed by Rauch, whose outline of moral philosophy became his own when he took over Rauch's course in ethics. Yet Nevin's philosophical development always served the development of his Catholic evangelical theology which, in spite of his opponent's arguments to the contrary, was understood by Nevin to be the best expression of modern American and Reformed orthodox theology.

We now take a closer look at the changes and speculate at the causes of Nevin's sojourn from the evangelical conservatism of Pennsylvania's rural Presbyterianism to the German idealistically informed evangelical catholicism of his maturity.

In spite of clear reverses in his theological thinking since his birth in 1803 and subsequent education, Nevin held fast to his earliest Reformed

and "objective" experiences of covenant, catechetical instruction, pastoral care and leadership, and regular use of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. These constituted for Nevin a more authentic church system than the "subjective" system he found at Union College, Schenectady, New York, and in the puritan church system which he believed derived from the same Arminian and revivalistic theology.

At Union Nevin and his fellow students found themselves confronted by the revivalistic system of theology which had captured many of America's Protestant religious institutions. Under Nettleton's influence Nevin confronted himself with the question of the certainty of his own salvation and likewise experienced the type of soul-searching and subjective introspection that he would later abhor for its inability to come to objective and collective expression within the institutional church.

In 1823 Nevin entered Princeton Seminary. James Nichols has effectively demonstrated how the pietistic seeds planted in Nevin at Union were nurtured by the "private 'soul-searching' induced by the inquiries of Dr. Alexander . . . ." These inquiries were juxtaposed with the dogmatic assurances tersely delivered by Turretin's Institutes, which was the standard theological text.[92]

Yet Charles Hodge's growing influence at Princeton ushered in a new era in which less emphasis would be placed on the certainty of one's election. Hodge would place more emphasis on the certainty of the biblical witness, as he understood it, according to the traditional tenets of the "old" New England theology, which he believed he was responsible for defending.

[92] Nichols, Romanticism, pp. 14-15.

Under Princeton's influence, and in step with the popular movement, Nevin enthusiastically turned to the scientific study of Scripture, which was the progressive field of the time. The new field of biblical literature had been opened up by the Germans. In time Nevin would master the language. But while at Princeton Nevin had to satisfy himself with translations. Nevertheless, his growing interest in German learning opened up a new world of theological inquiry.

Nevin approached this new discipline with the zeal that would characterize his life. At first he found the "bald infidelity" of the scientific school shocking.[93] Yet the controversial approach to Scripture which he discovered in authors like Ernesti, as translated by Andover's Stuart, not only captured Nevin and Princeton, but many other American students and seminaries as well.

From 1829 to 1840 Nevin taught Hebrew and biblical literature at Western Theological Seminary near Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. But his geographic move was not accompanied by any drastic move theologically. Indeed, Nichols contends that he effectively "transplanted" the Princeton curriculum to Western.[94]

Nichols argues that in those early years at Western Nevin remained "a representative evangelical 'Puritan'" who joined the seminary with the same puritan concept of the invisible nature of the Church which he had while at

[93] Nevin, Life, p. 98. Ernesti and others represented an approach to the New Testament in which the text itself was the source of revelation. Thus the progressive hermeneutic led to the practice of treating the critical text as the ultimate source of the Christian faith. Any individual sufficiently educated in the understanding of Scripture was equipped to discern Scripture's meaning.

[94] Nichols, "Nevin," p. 70.

Princeton.[95] This view is supported by an analysis of one of Nevin's early theological works.

In a sermon published while at Western Nevin defends his Princeton theology against the growing threat of Unitarianism.[96] As a source of his views he cites Joseph Butler whose moral theory was similar to the later Scottish Realism. Thus Nevin cites a theologian who, with Reid and Stewart, seeks a ground upon which to build a moral system. And, as would the common sense philosophers, Butler looks to humanity's inner nature for a moral sense or quality upon which he might build his moral philosophy.

Yet in this sermon Nevin cannot be seen to have directly subscribed to Butler's system of theology. We can only observe Nevin's Princeton-influenced departure from Westminster. In reflecting his conservative training, he cites examples of piety which, in the likes of Calvin, Luther, Baxter and Howe, suggest both his regard for traditional Calvinistic theology and, with Butler, Princeton's small departure from the most rigid form of Calvin's doctrine of election.

In spite of Nevin's early loyalty to Princeton, in his study of the rationalistic approach to Scripture common among the German field of biblical literature, it is clear that Nevin did not come to Western a Puritan in every way. He himself remarks that he entered Western a full student of modern hermeneutics. He writes of this stage:

[95] Nichols, Romanticism, pp. 21-22. Here Nichols' argument is similar to the earlier argument of Plummer, that Nevin's puritan traditionalism was intact on coming to Western. K. Plummer, "Theology of John Williamson Nevin to 1852," Diss. University of Chicago 1958, p. 38.

[96] John W. Nevin, "The Trinitarian and Unitarian Doctrines Concerning Jesus Christ," Presbyterian Preacher, 1 & 2 (1832-1834), pp. 65-80.

> I stood in the bosom of the new science of criticism and exegesis, as it had been imparted from Germany by Andover in the first place, and was now generally in credit throughout the country, without being aware at all of its hidden, dangerous relations to rationalistic infidelity.[97]

Thus prior to his coming to Western Nevin had quite nearly replaced at least his puritan approach to Scripture with the "rationalistic" approach of the German biblical critics. He claims that all that held him from complete conversion was his reading of the puritan divines, Baxter, Flavel, Owen and Howe.[98] Yet even these would agitate against the Princeton theology and the Scottish based realism which had become embedded in virtually all of American theology.

In spite of the support one would think Baxter, Flavel, Owen and Howe's puritan theology would lend to Nevin's modern puritanism and revivalistic theology in general (with the shared emphasis on piety), they raised for Nevin the idealistic notion of the possibility of a "divine spark" operative in mankind.

We have nothing to indicate whether Nevin saw the idealistically inspired concept of a "divine spark" as a better explanation for the ability of mankind to know God and do what is "right" in the eyes of God than the concept of a faculty of moral sense which Butler and common sense realism argued provided individuals with a knowledge of good and evil.

[97] Nevin, Life, p. 101. This school is identified by Nevin as given completely over to the "formal principle" (p. 104) and the practice of "Rationalistic Supernaturalism," which attempts, "A purely scriptural theology, without any help from the schools, seen through no confessional prism, and reflecting neither lights nor shades from any previous Christian history" (p. 107). For Nevin this stands in complete contrast to the confessional tradition which finds our natural reason coming "into the full firm apprehension of the supernatural; and this we find to hold simply in the teachings of Christ, set forth in the text of the New Testament under his own promise of inspiration;" (p. 108).

[98] This connection derives from the influence of their Platonic Oxford writings most likely inspired by More at Cambridge.

Neither can we say that Nevin choose one over the other. Indeed, it is unclear whether Nevin himself saw the distinction. Nevertheless there can be no doubt that these two contrasting explanations of human psychology and morality were coming into Nevin's experience while he was at Western.

Nevin's familiarity with both of these alternatives may in some small way explain his direction in the sermon, "The Trinitarian and Unitarian Doctrines Concerning Jesus Christ."

Consistent with his Princeton training Nevin is convinced of humanity's depravity. Yet also with Princeton, his exposure to common sense realism, or at least the faculty psychology of Butler, as well as his reading of the puritan divines, seem to lead him to suggest that man can freely participate in his moral development. This would naturally require him to reconsider his understanding of Calvin's position.[99]

However, at Western Nevin would have only seen idealism's objectivizing force. From his perspective idealism could offer an alternative to the subjective "fancies" of individual religious speculation, replacing these with the controlling force of the concrete "idea."

Although the seeds of idealism may have been planted by the puritan divines and may have been complemented by his reading of Coleridge, Wordsworth, Goethe and Herder, the reading which would bring Nevin to German Idealism began with the German church historians. This is not to say that he had not previously encountered a form of the study of church history. Nevin had become familiar with Mosheim at Princeton. Mosheim pioneered the new field of historiography. But Nevin found Mosheim dry and

[99] The concept of a universal moral sense in each individual no matter what their beliefs makes very little sense if Christ died only for the elect.

barren. And the field itself remained the study of facts and dates. It did not include the search for a coherent theory which derived from the historical facts themselves. Rather, history's "mechanical" progress was usually interpreted according to the dogmatic interests of the interpreter. Nevin writes:

> Revelation had for me then, properly speaking, no historical character. My metaphysical Calvinism, as I had sucked it from the Westminster Shorter Catechism, came in here also, to aggravate the evil for that throughout resolves all history, as we know, into a scheme of transcendental necessity (God's decrees) which is not conditioned at all by any factoral force on the side of human freedom.[100]

It was in the course of his study of history at Western that Nevin began the serious consideration of German philosophy. At Western Nevin explored the historical theory of Schaff's great teacher and the historian of the Mediating school, August Neander.

Western Seminary was also where Nevin first read from the Oxford Tracts. And while his opinion of the tractarians, and of Newman, was always cautious and generally lacking praise, Oxford first raised for him the question of the Church, which became the central practical question of Mercersburg's consideration.

During his stay at Western the Presbyterian Church was experiencing controversy between the "Old" and "New" schools. The protracted antagonisms led to the Old School's refusal to recognize the "New School" commissioners.

Nevin hated the incipient factionalism and worked to mitigate the divisiveness by suggesting a less centralized system of synods which allowed for more freedom. (This was the plan introduced by Alexander.)

[100] Nevin, Life, p. 51.

Nevin remained loyal to the Old School theology. Yet it was in the trial of Albert Barnes, 1835, who was a leader in the New School movement, that Nevin probably became acquainted with the discrepancy between the Old School doctrine of the atonement and Calvin's doctrine of the atonement. This discrepancy may have first led Nevin to take a closer look at Calvin.

Theodore Appel has made reference to Nevin's reading up to his arrival at Mercersburg in 1840. The two years before he arrived at Western Nevin read texts on politics and economics which included the works of Wayland, Adam Smith, Malthus and Jeremy Bentham. Once at Pittsburgh Nevin concentrated on his own field of biblical literature by reading the Old Testament critics, Rosenmuller, Gesenius and DeWette. (Later, Nevin would consider himself to have been under the rationalist influence.) However, in his reading of poetry Nevin admired the romantics including Wordsworth, Coleridge, Goethe and Herder. Theologically he read Tholuck and Olshausen. In history he discovered the Oxford Tracts, Joseph Lathrop, Neander, Gieseler and Sartorius. Here Nevin would learn to consider each historical age in its own context, and try to discover the principle which controlled it.[101]

NEVIN'S DEVELOPMENT AT MERCERSBURG

Nevin's most critical move came in 1840 when he accepted the offer of the German Reformed Church to teach theology at their seminary in Mercersburg. Nevin's loyalty to the Presbyterian Church was such that in deliberation he sought the counsel of his mentor, Archibald Alexander. And, as Nichols points out, while Nevin did accept the call to the GRC, he continued to teach the "old-school Calvinistic orthodoxy" which he had taught at Western. Nichols writes:

[101] Theodore Appel, The Life and Work of John Williamson Nevin (Philadelphia: Reformed Church Publication House, 1889).

> In most practical aspects of church life, as well as in ecclesiastical and doctrinal matters, Nevin continued at Mercersburg in the directions laid down in his 'Scotch Reformed' days. He remained a conservative Irish evangelical, molded by Princeton scholasticism, strong for private-judgment biblicism and a vigorous promoter of various evangelical and moralistic causes.[102]

However, at Mercersburg Nevin met Rauch. There is disagreement as to the theological interaction between these men. Nichols has argued from his source that Rauch and Nevin "never discussed religion intimately . . . ."[103] Appel, on the other hand, contends that Nevin's discussions with Rauch were "frequent and protracted."[104] And Nevin himself states that his association with Rauch was "intimate," and that his reading of the Psychology left him convinced that Rauch was one of Germany's leading minds.[105]

It remains a point of contention as to the nature and extent of personal contact between the men. But the fact that Rauch's German Idealism influenced Nevin is generally agreed upon. What is not so easily settled is both the nature and quality of that influence.

One of Mercersburg's most ardent critics was James I. Good. His distaste for Nevin makes it difficult to separate feeling from fact, yet his observations on this point warrant consideration.

Naturally Good sees Nevin distorting what he learned from Rauch. Good says that by 1844 Nevin had left his "old Calvinism" and because of Rauch

[102] Nichols, Romanticism, p. 36.

[103] Nichols, Romanticism, p. 47. Nichols reports that this was something said by Nevin later in his life. It is also the suggestion made by David Schaff and James I. Good.

[104] Appel, The Life, p. 102.

[105] Nevin, "Eulogy" (1859), pp. 455-456.

was moving "toward German philosophical and theological positions."[106] But, says Good, Nevin, with his "Scotch mind," was unable to completely grasp the "spiritualistic idealism of the German mind," and thus he "unconsciously emphasized the real over against the ideal."[107]

Good's argument is based on an untenable racial presupposition. But he has recognized both Nevin's dependence on Rauch and his emphasis on the real over against the purely ideal. What Good fails to take into consideration is Rauch's own Hegelianism which, if Rauch were thoroughly Hegelian philosophically, would have insisted that the real is the ideal. Rauch does make a similar assertion in his Psychology.[108] Furthermore, Good has placed Rauch in a direct line with Nevin. This is similar to the position of Nichols who thinks that Nevin fused his Calvinism with what he learned from Rauch.[109]

Whatever the influence of Rauch, Nevin turned his energies toward German Idealism which included the enormous influence of Hegel, Schleiermacher and the Mediating theologians. The Mediating school's Neander, Dorner and Ullmann made direct and lasting contributions to Nevin's developing theology.

Nevin seems to have adopted Rauch's general position with regard to German Idealism. Like Rauch, Nevin credits Kant with positing the concept of "the autonomy of the will" and for raising the question of the Absolute for

[106] James I. Good, History of the Reformed Church in the U.S. in the Nineteenth Century (New York: The Board of Publication of the Reformed Church in America, 1911), p. 210.

[107] Good, History, p. 211.

[108] Rauch, Psychology, pp. 175-186.

[109] Nichols, Romanticism, p. 48.

religion. By 1849 he is well enough acquainted with both Kant and Hegel to take up Hegel's rejection of the "categoric imperative" [sic.]. Thus Nevin stands with Hegel (and with Rauch) in arguing that an abstract moral universal law cannot affect real life. Nevin takes up the criticism that because Kant's moral law is a matter of the pure practical reason it is a principle of formal character whose essence is to have no particular content. Kant had not maintained reason as an independent reality. Nevin wants to affirm reason as a self-subsisting law having independent ontological status. He writes:

> As thus universal and necessary, the being of the law is infinitely real. It is not simply the thought or conception of what is right, not a name merely or mental abstraction representing a certain order of life which men are required to observe; but it is the very forms of truth and right themselves, the absolutely independent power by which they exist in the world.[110]

In his appropriation of this insight, Nevin would find direct implications for the Calvinistic concept of God's eternal decrees. While the law, as reason, exists in God as eternal, these laws are not abstractions,

> as if God might be supposed, in the exercise of any private arbitrary will of his own, to have devised and ordained it as a proper scheme after which to fashion the order of the universe. The universality of the law excludes, as we have already seen, the idea of all merely private or particular will, even though it were conceived to be in this form the will of God himself.[111]

As we shall see, [redacted] had come to consider the Princeton theology, which held the decrees of God to be eternal and universal, to be, in fact, an expression of "private or particular will" which is made to appear the

[110] Nevin, "Freedom," p. 12.

[111] Nevin, "Freedom," p. 12.

"form of the will of God himself." In this Nevin seeks to avoid the error of subjectivity which allows an inorganic and non-developmental interpretation of history to become dogma. Nevin, now in full agreement with German Idealism, has become convinced that historical events cannot be treated in a manner which is not scientific, even if the events are supernatural and related to the history of God's involvement in human affairs. Revelation is too easily manipulated into subjective systems which serve to uphold a particular theological interpretation rather than serve to resolve the objective question of the Church's historical development.

In the 1849 article, "Human Freedom," Nevin stands with Rauch and with what sounds a bit like Schleiermacher, in maintaining that reason has elements of both a divine and a human quality. The dogma of the eternal decrees of God is a particular interpretation of history and a product of the Church's reflection on its own historical experience.

Because Nevin was one of the first in America to read and begin publishing works which reflected his understanding of German Idealism, and because of the controversial nature of his work and the difficulty American theologians and pastors had in understanding it, Nevin was often branded a disciple of whomever he cited in print or even remotely resembled. James I. Good called him a maverick from Rauch's teaching and ultimately a follower of Hegel and Schelling.[112] Hodge accused him of being a disciple of Schleiermacher.[113] And Brownson suggested that Nevin

[112] Good, History, pp. 237-8.

[113] Charles Hodge, "Doctrine of the Reformed Church, On the Lord's Supper," rev. of The Mystical Presence, by John W. Nevin, Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review, 20 (1848), p. 264.

was a Fichtean.[114]

It is hard to believe that Nevin could be all of these at once. What is apparent is that Nevin had delved deeply into the contemporary German philosophical and theological literature, and that the direction which Rauch encouraged in him was the decisive course he took.

F.P. Ryan has sought to identify the philosophic tradition of the idealistic philosophy of Schelling and Hegel in Nevin, especially as it involves Nevin's understanding of teleology. Ryan writes that, on the basis of Hegel's insight of the dialectic of becoming,

> . . . Nevin could view all humanity, in its outward manifestation, as the expression of the Ideal, as the expression of the mind of God that lay behind the visible world.[115]

Ryan suggests that Nevin's vision of the world and its moral institutions, moving toward perfection in the rational activity of mankind, was a vision borrowed from Hegel and Schelling.[116]

Ryan's insight is to see Nevin, certainly by 1849, as clearly having adopted much of the German idealistic philosophy to which he had been exposed. Nevin sees the world in terms of its "inner" meaning, which is its "idea." But Ryan, whether consciously or not, will place Nevin in the position held by the earlier Schelling against that of Hegel. Ryan argues that to the idealist the idea, apart from its expression in the phenomenal world is of primary importance. The mind of God, as idea, is above the external sequence of visible phenomena.

[114] John W. Nevin, "Brownson's Review Again," Mercersburg Review, 2 (1850), p. 308.

[115] Ryan, "Nevin," p. 54.

[116] Ryan, "Nevin," p. 308.

This is essentially Schelling's position. Yet Nevin, like Hegel, would not lose sight of the need for the balance of objective and subjective poles which describe the manifestation of God's will (or idea) in the world. However, on this point Nevin is quite unlike both Hegel and Schelling.

Certainly the Absolute is God for all three of them. But Nevin's confessional theology will not allow him to equate God with the Absolute. That which is the Absolute principle of the universe is God. But Nevin will not go so far as to say God is the Absolute in a purely philosophical sense. That is to say, Nevin cannot begin with Absolute existence. As much as God is the Absolute principle of the universe, he is also personality, creator, triune, etc. Nevin cannot abstract certain qualities from God in order to begin with pure infinite existence. Rather, he begins by assuming content (traditional orthodox doctrine) in the idea of God which he argues is characteristic of an absolute personality which cannot be abstracted into pure, absolute existence. Thus Nevin does not equate God with mind nor with the Absolute. Nevin can go only as far as his confessional limits will allow him. And one limit is to allow the idealistic philosophy the insight of a world of real existence, which is the dynamic, absolute expression of God's will, as perceived by Mind. Mind, however, only has its "seat" in God and is not God himself.[117]

Again, Nevin borrows the concepts which he finds useful in solving theological problems without concerning himself with the philosophic havoc it plays with the internal consistency of the arguments themselves. He

[117] Nevin, "Freedom," pp. 3-24.

writes of the systems of Schelling and Hegel:

> There is no good reason why the thinking even of Schelling or Hegel, though in no fellowship whatever with the Christian faith as such, should not be acknowledged as of real weight for theological science, where it has to do even in a false and insufficient way with interests and relations which it is the province of such science to set in proper light.[118]

Nevertheless, he adds that it has been the virtue of modern German philosophy to force theology to address certain hitherto unanswered questions, and to make theology advance with the advance of culture.[119]

In spite of German philosophy's contributions to theology, Nevin agreed with the German mediating theologians that Hegel and Schleiermacher had fallen into error on the crucial concept of the inward organic development of the historical Church. While Hegel and Schleiermacher had grasped this concept as the key to understanding historical advance, they transgressed against its inward unity and logic by making the Christian faith "transcend" the original idea which constituted the faith founded by Christ. Says Nevin, the principle of organic inward law prohibits the unorthodox positions taken by the philosophers. He contends that according to the organic principle, the Church will develop into a variety of historical expressions, but it cannot transform itself or be transformed from the basic character which was established by Christ. Just as an acorn can become an infinite variety of oak trees, some strong, others tall and still others weak, the acorn cannot become a birch tree, or an eggplant.

[118] John W. Nevin, "Liebner's Christology," Mercersburg Review, 3 (1851), p. 57.

[119] John W. Nevin, Introd., The Principle of Protestantism, by Philip Schaff (Chambersburg: Publication Office of the German Reformed Church, 1845), p. 20.

The law of inward organic development allows that the Church is free to develop an infinite variety of qualities or historical expressions, but it cannot transcend its basic form and still be considered the Church. For Nevin the concepts of the Church produced by Hegel and other radical philosophers represent ideas which violate the law of inward organic development. The philosophers suggest forms of the Church which do not agree with the essential form of the Church as originally established by Christ, nor can these modern ideas of the Church be said to have developed organically from the Church's original form.[120]

In the case of Hegel Nevin believed his "fixed idea" (as the guiding principle of his philosophy) is the source of his historical error regarding the Church. Nevin wrote that Hegel's "fixed idea" had replaced the traditional understanding of the providential development of the Church. Hegel had made a "principle" the absolute standard for determining history. Thus he violated the orthodox requirement that only by faith is revelation known.[121]

This understanding of Hegel comes most clearly to the foreground in Nevin's criticism of the Hegelian philosopher, Rothe. Nevin believes that Rothe had taken Hegel beyond Hegel. Rothe violates the organic principle by seeing the state as ultimately swallowing up the Church. Nevin responds that, "The Church will not lose itself in the state; but it will be the state rather that shall be found then to have vanished away in the church."[122]

[120] Nevin, "Liebner's Christology," p. 58.

[121] John W. Nevin, "Brownson's Quarterly Review," Mercersburg Review, 2 (1850), p. 47f.

[122] John W. Nevin, "Early Christianity: Third Article," Mercersburg Review, 4 (1852), pp. 42-43.

Nevin also stands with the Mediating school with regard to their critique of Schleiermacher. They found Schleiermacher brilliant but too unorthodox in his Christian faith. There is a profound respect for Schleiermacher's insights. Indeed, Nevin considered him the Origen of his age, suggesting both theological brilliance and unorthodoxy.[123] And Schleiermacher seems to have been the source of Nevin's use of the important concept of the organic view of the Church.

In a useful study of Nevin's consideration of Calvin's eucharistic theology, Brian Gerrish reminds us that Nevin cites Schleiermacher in defending his interpretation of Calvin's concept of Christ's "real presence" in the eucharistic celebration. In Gerrish's analysis he recognizes that Nevin shared Schleiermacher's concept of totality (Lebenszusammenhang) "which is not produced by individuals but, quite the contrary, produces them; . . . ."[124]

Gerrish points out that Troeltsch credits Schleiermacher with this discovery. But, says Gerrish, in romantic style and in content, Schleiermacher had no monopoly on this concept's development. "On the American scene - and, as it happens, in the German Reformed church, - it was Nevin who was the most eloquent advocate of the organic view of the church."[125]

Time and again Nevin shows himself to be familiar with Schleiermacher's

[123] Nevin, "Liebner's Christology," p. 58.

[124] Brian A. Gerrish, "The Flesh of the Son of Man: John W. Nevin on the Church and the Eucharist," in Tradition and the Modern World: Reformed Theology in the Nineteenth Century (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978) p. 69.

[125] Gerrish, "The Flesh," p. 69.

work and genuinely indebted to him for his moral philosophy. It was Schleiermacher who taught him that all aspects of social existence which have their union in morality are under the general heading of religion, and are "fully actualized in the glorious union of the One Holy Catholic Church."[126]

Yet the immediate source of Nevin's theological development was the Mediating school. Christology was Mercersburg's theological starting point and from this point they would consider philosophy, ethics and the modern sciences. From theologians and church historians like Isaac Dorner, A. Neander and Carl Ullmann, Nevin gained the basic theological identity from which he would never depart. The seminal quality of their work was so important to Nevin that, as a sort of opening manifesto to his most important theological work, The Mystical Presence, he included his translation of Ullmann's "The Distinctive Character of Christianity." In so doing he aligns himself with the German Mediating theologians and their position that the progress made in theological science has reached its apex in the "Christological struggles" of this period.[127]

With these theologians and historians Nevin defended the "first" principle of the centrality of Christ as an historical fact. And with them his critique of all doctrine began with historical study and the principle of the rational development of the Church according to historical laws. From this he developed his perception of the state of modern Christianity.

The outline of this shared perception included the idea of the

[126] John W. Nevin, "The Moral Order of Sex," Mercersburg Review, 2 (1850), p. 553.

[127] Nevin, Mystical, p. 14. Carl Ullmann, "The Distinctive Character of Christianity," Theologische Studien und Kritiken, 1845.

medieval Roman church as having lost sight of Christianity's material principle. Rome floundered in a formal principle which made the institutional church the only means of grace, abandoning the fact that Christ is the only true source of grace. The Reformation sought to correct that abuse by insisting on the role individual faith has in obtaining the the benefits of Christ. Naturally freedom became associated with the Reformation cause because of the emphasis on the role of the individual in obtaining eternal life. This led to abuses which had the effect of establishing new formal principles; principles which, as in the case of Rome, led to the identification of objects in place of Christ as the source of salvation. The first abuse was extreme Calvinism or scholasticism which became "intellectual solifidianism." Here a particular doctrine became the guaranteer of salvation and good works had no place whatsoever. The second abuse, in the form of extreme pietism, produced wild sectarianism which scorned "the outward word and sacraments . . . resolving all religion into private inspiration and fancy . . . ." This abuse made the inner mirror of the individual soul the source of salvation. Finally, the third abuse took the form of "Liberal and Rationalistic Christianity" which stares out from its camp, writes Nevin,

> with a sort of cold Mephistopheles grin . . . where it is made to be another word only for the rejection of all positive Christianity, and a general trust in God without any reference to Christ whatever.[128]

With the Mediating school of Germany and his colleague Philip Schaff, Nevin would seek a new theological ground upon which could be established a rational theology of sound orthodoxy able to address the modern problem of

[128] John W. Nevin, "Dorner's History of Protestant Theology: First Article," Mercersburg Review, 15 (1868), p. 275.

God's participation in human history.

PHILIP SCHAFF'S PHILOSOPHIC DEVELOPMENT

We conclude chapter one with a general discussion of Schaff's philosophical development.

Like Nevin, Schaff was born into a conservative evangelical family. And like Nevin, Schaff experienced an early conversion sparked by a form of pietistic soul-searching. But unlike Nevin, Schaff's conversion was a private affair and had no connection with revivalism. Thus he never expressed anxiety over this episode of his life. Rather, it was the source of his choosing a religious vocation.

Schaff grew up and was educated in a German pietistic culture. His first real encounter with the theological debates raging in Germany during his youth was when he entered the university at Tübingen. At Tübingen Schaff became the student of the idealist theologian, F.C. Baur. Baur introduced Schaff to the idealistic philosophy and to the Hegelian interpretation of historical progress. Schaff never abandoned the method of dialectical philosophy by which historical progress and thought are seen to develop as stages in the movement of Das Geist. However, Baur's scientifically grounded philosophy had very little room for some of the most basic beliefs of evangelical theology. Thus Schaff departed from his teacher at the point of Baur's rejection of such doctrines as God's direct and personal involvement with history and the reality of the miracles.

Schaff would find Neander more in keeping with an understanding of history which at least held to the sacred respect for the mystery of the incarnation. Schaff could go so far as to require theology and history to be rational in the science of determining its historical development, but he dogmatically insisted that the essence of Christianity is a mystery

which can only be believed by faith. History is, in part, supernatural. God's providence and Christ's miracles are realities and are very much a part of the supernatural development of the Church.

Furthermore, the incarnation was an historical fact and not 'simply' an idea. And although Hegelians may have trouble seeing the difference between the "idea" and its historical manifestation, it was a serious impasse in the thinking of Philip Schaff. Against the Hegelians he asserted that Christ's coming was a particular historical event of supernatural origin. So, while Schaff took from Baur the concept of dialectical progress in history, he distanced himself from the Hegelian principle which required a scientific explanation of all phenomena. Instead Schaff followed Neander's method, seeking to describe the immanent forces which guided the development of the Church.

Schaff came to idealist theology and its historical and christological theology by way of members of the Mediating movement which was prominent at the time that Schaff studied at Tübingen. Schaff was personally acquainted with members of the movement. Both Hegel and Schleiermacher were dead. But their students, many of whom were part of the Mediating group, continued to develop and critique their work. Their influence on Schaff led him to identify an organic historical process within the Church; a process which develops in a continuous line from Christ to the modern day.

But Schaff's identification with the Mediating school stopped at their doctrine of the Church. Schaff found certain members of the Mediating group too liberal. He was especially critical of those whom he called "latitudianarians." He could not condone their lack of a firm position with regard to the creeds and the institutional church. His growing interest in the question of the sacraments and the unity of the Church made him

critical of, for example, Neander's position on infant baptism. Furthermore, Schaff had a romantic attachment to the concept of the One Universal Holy and Apostolic Church and to a vision of the Church's "real" unity (both spiritual and physical) in the age to come. In this he was heavily influenced by the churchly wing of the Neo-Pietist movement.

The Neo-Pietists' evangelical, confessional and objective theology, as well as their political conservatism, attracted Schaff who, with many other Germans, was appalled at the religious and political "chaos" in France. Moreover, their romantic interest in the Church's apostolic authority and tradition, as well as its glorious future unity, coincided with Schaff's theological position.

At Berlin Schaff heard Schelling's lectures on the philosophy of religion. This was during Schelling's last "theistic" period. Schaff adopted Schelling's interpretation of the dialectical advance of the Church in the characters of St. Peter and St. Paul who, in the dialectical confrontation of their theologies, produce the age of the future; the age of St. John. The ecumenical work which would highlight Schaff's life, especially after he left Mercersburg, was inspired by this philosophical concept.

Philip Schaff was born in 1819 to a Swiss Moravian family during the period in which the German countries were becoming "Awakened" to the Neo-Pietism which challenged rationalism in the first half of the nineteenth century. After receiving his formative education in the pietist strongholds at Korntal, Württemburg and Stuttgart, Schaff, eighteen years of age, began his university education at Tübingen.

At Tübingen Schaff came under the direct influence of the philosopher and theologian F.C. Baur, the biblical theologian C.F. Schmid, and the

Mediating theologian Isaac Dorner. Baur is responsible for Schaff's education in the thought of Hegel. Through Baur, Schaff appropriated from Hegel what Klaus Penzel argues is his romantic concept of history as self-evolving. The Geist of history manifests itself in a rational, lawful process such that even the development of the Church follows the "laws of the idealistic dialectic."[129]

While Schaff borrowed Hegel's theory of historical development, at other levels he was in disagreement with Hegel. Kathryn Johnson points out that in spite of Schaff's sharing with Hegel the concept of historical development, and the belief that the incarnation is the "axis on which the history of the world turns," Schaff concentrated on the necessity of the incarnation as an historical event, while Hegel concentrated on the development of the idea of incarnation in human consciousness.[130]

The source of Schaff's disagreement with his teacher was his evangelicalism. Schaff's conservative or confessional evangelical theology would not permit him to accept the purely philosophical approach of Hegel. Equally, Schaff remained stubbornly evangelical on the period's hotly contested belief in providence and miracles. Says Johnson, in this Schaff held to ideas which, at this period of time, were considered archaic and in disharmony with the Hegelian method taught by Baur and Strauss. Baur taught a scientific method which was based on the rationality and internal consistency of history's development. There was little room for a concept of providence if that concept allowed that God could act or interfere in history in a manner which defied rational explanation. Miracles and providential acts were considered by Baur to be irrational explanations of

[129] Penzel, "Reformation," p. 225.

[130] Johnson, "Seed," p. 127.

historical phenomena. Johnson writes that Schaff

> did not concern himself with the methodological consequences of his theological affirmation but rather sought to account for the immanent forces guiding the church's development.[131]

It appears that at the point of the challenge of Hegel's thought to Schaff's evangelicalism, Schaff remained orthodox.

One of the central issues being discussed at Tübingen at that time was the issue of the reliability of the biblical witnesses' account of Christ. Schaff's evangelical position maintained the historical accuracy of the biblical writers. In this Schaff differed greatly from Baur. While Baur placed enormous importance on the concept of the incarnation for culture in general, Schaff made it the factual center of human history. George Shriver argues that Schaff understood the incarnation as a proleptic phenomenon which consummates history itself. Says Shriver, while history moves forward for Schaff, all progress after Christ is merely a fuller "appropriation" of his "divine human life . . . . " In Schaff's christocentrism the proleptic event directly contradicts Hegel and Baur and suggests the influence of Schleiermacher.[132]

Schleiermacher's christological starting-point became Schaff's through the influence of Dorner, Neander and other Mediating theologians, although it is certain that Schaff read Schleiermacher as well. Schleiermacher's christology produced in Schaff the conviction that the Christian faith depends entirely on "the doctrine of the union of the divine Essence with human nature . . ." as experienced in the character of Christ and the

[131] Johnson, "Seed." p. 135.

[132] Schriver, "Schaff's Concept," pp. 71-144.

Church.[133]

Schleiermacher also pioneered in the modern scientific and systematic treatment of theology. Schaff later wrote that Schleiermacher's Encyclopedia applied the reflective concept of method to the ongoing classification of religious knowledge. Schaff himself took this approach in his own Theological Propaedeutic. He says the idea for the work came from both Schleiermacher and Hegel as it is a synthesis of Schleiermacher's scientific analysis of the structure of religious consciousness and Hegel's "philosophical classification of religions on the basis of historical development or evolution." The work is a history of religion according to the governing principle of organic development. Its central thesis is that the function of religion is to reunite God and man.[134]

While at Tübingen Schaff would have had access to many schools of thought. But F.C. Baur was the university's dominant intellectual influence. Nevertheless, Schaff distanced himself from Baur not only in terms of his evangelical stand, but in his understanding of the philosophy of history. Like Nevin, Schaff criticised those theories of the Church which he felt violated the principle of organic development by arguing that the Church cannot transcend itself in its modern development. Kathryn Johnson has hinted at Schaff's critique of Baur on this point. She suggests that Schaff found discontinuity in Baur's concept of organic development. Baur's interpretation of historical progress rightly holds that history's dialectical negation of itself produces higher stages of development. But

[133] Penzel, "Reformation," p. 225.

[134] Philip Schaff, Theological Propaedeutic: A General Introduction to the Study of Theology, Exegetical, Historical, Systematic, and Practical, Including Encyclopedia, Methodology, and Bibliography (New York: Christian Literature Co., 1892), pp. 6-17.

in Baur's model each synthesis is an entirely new development. This, she says, contrasts with the richest understanding of the organic idea.[135]

Like Nevin, Schaff would continue to hold that the original idea of Christianity, as established by Christ, could not be negated. In so doing, Schaff and Nevin rejected the monistic concept of historical development conceived by Hegel. Instead they maintained a philosophical position which, by beginning with certain doctrinal presuppositions, maintained a material difference between sacred and secular history.

Hegel's idea of history brought all historical institutions into conformity with the development of the "one" historical idea. Thus one idea expresses itself in many historical forms. This is Hegel's monistic philosophy. It is also the necessary implication of a philosophy which gives the philosopher access to absolute knowledge. Yet Schaff's holding distinct the Christian idea and the Christian Church's traditional doctrines and structure from the single development of the historical Geist places classical doctrines of belief above Hegel's unified monism. At the same time Schaff and Nevin's theology would not simply rest with classical or Reformed theology. Instead they would seek a new theology which was both scientific and orthodox.

Ultimately Schaff (and Nevin) would reinterpret classical and Cartesian dualism which bifurcated reality into the spiritual world of revelation and the material world of sense. They did this by borrowing idealism's concept of the reunion of the material world with the spiritual world in reason or Mind. Thus all of reality is spiritual. Where that spirituality exists in the world it manifests itself also in a material

[135] Johnson, "Seed," p. 128.

form. Yet unlike Hegel and other idealists, Mercersburg would maintain that the individual mind which reasons by faith intuits an order of existence which both gives evidence of the world unknown by the senses and likewise confirms the orthodox teaching of the Christian Church. They retain the classical division of reality which divides the world into spiritual and material aspects. Yet at the same time they modify that position by adopting idealism's philosophical concept of the unity of the spiritual and material worlds. In this they distinguish themselves from Hegel's thought by retaining a psychological division of reality which sees positions outside of the Christian confession as positions which suffer from a lack of the necessary insight of faith; that any understanding of reality which is in disagreement with the ancient confessional position of the Church can be only a partial understanding of reality.

Johnson described Schaff's position that the development of the Church cannot be correctly understood by a non-confessional or unorthodox concept of history's development. Says Johnson, in Schaff's understanding of the philosophy of religion, there could be no advance in the Church which supersedes what the Church has in Christ from the beginning.[136]

After two years at Tübingen Schaff went to the university in Halle. At Halle Schaff was influenced by the Neo-Pietist Tholuck. Schaff had been introduced to Tholuck by Dorner and became a house guest during his stay in Halle. Undoubtably Tholuck instructed Schaff in the Neo-Pietist cause and introduced him to many of its supporters. At Halle Schaff encountered firsthand the battle being waged by Tholuck against the dominant influence of rationalism.

[136] Johnson, "Seed," p. 138.

Schaff next studied at Berlin where he was primarily infuenced by Neander. Neander took special interest in Schaff and passed on to him his understanding of the history of the church.[137] Trost has argued that it was Neander who convinced Schaff that "the history of the Church is the record of the permeation of human life by the divine life, communicated by God in Jesus Christ . . . ."[138] And it was Neander who examined Schaff in church history when he was ready to graduate from Berlin.[139]

Still, Schaff had certain differences with Neander. Trost has maintained that Schaff's theory of historical development resembled Neander's position which was between the rationalists, who saw development as a natural progression and the orthodox, who saw something unchanging in the history of the Church. Yet where Schaff criticised Neander was at the point of his weak position with regard to the authority and visible unity of the Church. Schaff believed Neander's position reflected his ultimately subjective interpretation of the importance and meaning of the incarnation. In effect, Schaff retained his confessionalism while Neander was a latitudinarian.[140]

In summary of Schaff's position, Penzel believes that Schaff grafted Baur on to Neander. He says the effect was generally to keep to Schleiermacher and Neander's historical theology. Yet Schaff fused Baur's dialectical method to his own individualizing and evangelical concepts. The end product was an "interpretation of the history of Christianity as a self-unfolding organic process in which Christ's life becomes

[137] Nichols, Romanticism, p. 69.

[138] Trost, "Philip Schaff's Concept," p. 27.

[139] David Schaff, "Life," p. 35.

[140] Trost, "Philip Schaff's Concept," pp. 145-147.

'individualized' in his followers."[141]

Schaff's first response to the controversies he found at Berlin was to put himself squarely in the camp of the Mediating theologians. His admiration for Schleiermacher naturally produced similar admiration for Schleiermacher's students, especially as they demonstrated a more conservative theological stand than that of their mentor. Furthermore Schaff must have admired their attempt to discover a middle path between rationalism and pietism. And in spite of the influence of Baur, Schaff could not have felt comfortable in the crumbing religious edifice built by Hegel and his followers which was split between its radical and conservative elements. Indeed Schaff believed it was the attacks of Hegel's left on the life and character of Jesus which created the urgency of the Mediating theology. With the Mediating school Schaff believed that the modern theological problem was the problem of who Jesus was. And Christ, for them, had to be explained in terms of the modern context which began anthropomorphically, starting with Christ's humanity and proceeding to his divinity.[142]

At Berlin Schaff was also influenced by the great Mediating theologians August Twesten, who presided over Schaff's disputation, and Carl Ullmann.[143]

In spite of his sympathy with the Mediating school's approach to the question of Christ's importance for history and theology, Schaff did not

[141] Klaus Penzel, "Church History In Context: The Case of Philip Schaff," in Our Common History as Christians: Essays In Honor of Albert C. Outler., ed. J. Deschner, et al. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975) p. 234.

[142] Schaff, Person, pp. 7-8.

[143] Nichol's, Mercersburg, p. 22.

share some of the mediator's distrust of institutional religion. While at Berlin Schaff became interested in the Neo-Pietism of E.W. Hengstenberg and the churchly ideas of Leopold and Ludwig von Gerlach. Penzel writes:

> It was then that Schaff began to concentrate his attention on 'the church question,' which was to mean to Schaff that contemporary Protestantism stood in dire need of a 'churchly,' sacramental, liturgical renewal that would gather in the rich harvest of the history of the universal church and would in due time simultaneously issue in the 'catholic' perfection of Protestantism and the 'evangelical' perfection of Roman Catholicism, thus ushering in the final stage in the history of the Christian church, that of an Evangelical Catholicism.[144]

In spite of the Mediating school's respect for churchly authority and their attempt to reconcile Christianity and modern science, Penzel believes that during Schaff's Berlin years he moved from the subjective positions held by the mediators, to the more "objective" question of the Church. In this position he found himself depending on the high-church wing of the Neo-Pietist movement.[145]

By 1827 the leadership of Neo-Pietism was under Hengstenberg and the von Gerlach brothers. Penzel credits Hengstenberg with being the first to draw attention to the similarity of rationalism and extreme pietism. Hengstenberg emphasized that both are ultimately subjective in their foundation as well as being utterly unchurchly in practice. Penzel writes that Schaff was introduced to the goals of High Orthodoxy by the von Gerlachs. It was Ludwig von Gerlach who led Schaff to apply the "romantic" principle of organic development in understanding Lutheran orthodoxy. This principle saw the Lutheran church developing directly from Medieval

[144] Penzel, "Reformation," p. 21.

[145] Penzel, "Church History," p. 87.

Catholicism. It was a decisive step away from the emphasis ordinarily placed on the invisible church. The organic concept put its emphasis on the visible church. Each stage of the Church's development brought it closer to its eventual form which was a synthesis of Protestantism and Roman Catholicism. Similarly Nichols writes:

> In Berlin Schaff became a protege of E.W. Hengstenberg (1802-69), the rigid Biblicist who was also the most powerful ecclesiastical politician in Prussia, and of Ludwig von Gerlach (1795-1877), the leading spokesman for the theocratic high-church views of the royal court. Here Schaff's individualist pietism developed into "evangelical catholicity" not long before he sailed for New York . . . .[146]

THE INFLUENCE OF SCHELLING

The last crucial influence we mention during Schaff's years at university is that of Friedrich Schelling. Schelling's lectures at Berlin on the philosophy of religion had a direct impact on Schaff's concept of the dialectical development of the Church and the result of that development in the Church's ecumenical future.

In 1897 David Schaff reported from his father's notes that he had heard Schelling's lectures in 1841.[147] Klaus Penzel has attempted to establish the degree to which these lectures influenced Schaff. Penzel sees a strong romantic character in Schaff's future vision of the Church. Schaff's tradition placed great importance on the unity of the Church as Christ's body. And Schaff had expressed dissatisfaction with the nineteenth-century spread of sectarianism. Such divisiveness, says Penzel, led Schaff on a desperate search for an "Evangelical Catholicism." He

[146] Nichols, Mercersburg, p. 6.

[147] David Schaff, Life, p. 34.

found it in Schelling's thirty-sixth and thirty-seventh lectures on the philosophy of religion. Penzel writes:

> Indeed, those two lectures became the magna carta of Schaff's own church historical and ecumenical views, the polar star of his lifelong efforts on behalf of Christian unity on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean.[148]

The dialectical model shared by Schelling and adopted by Schaff not only conceived the medieval church as suffering from an imbalance on the side of the formal principle, making the ecclesiastical or outward structure of the Church primary, but it identified this imbalance as characteristic of a Petrine type. In opposition to this formalism there developed the antithesis which contrasted the objective, legalistic church of the Middle Ages with the Reformation church which stressed the material principle of freedom in Christ. Yet in its over-emphasis of freedom it developed new formalisms. The over-emphasis of freedom was characteristic of the Pauline type of church structure. In analysis of these dialectical poles Schelling suggested that the balanced synthesis of material and formal principles will be the Church of the future. This Church, which will synthesize legalism and freedom into the new first principle of divine love, is characterized as the Johannine church.

Penzel says of Schaff's concept of the Church's development:

> Schaff sincerely believed he had found they [sic] key to the meaning of the history of Christianity in the principle of historical development as molded by the romantic - idealistic currents of early nineteenth-century German culture.[149]

[148] Penzel, "Reformation," p. 227.

[149] Penzel, "Reformation," p. 227.

Schaff shares with Schelling an idea of the Church as the one apostolic Church established by Christ. It develops itself organically through the centuries, yet it retains its original character. And only the perfect dialectic of Petrine and Pauline characteristics, fused together through the historical process of sublation (Aufhebung) into a Johannine synthesis will constitute the true apostolic Church of the future. Penzel writes:

> They together - a unity in diversity, where yet John represents the final synthesis of the other two positions - reflect the divine life that had become incarnate in Christ; this divine life had through the Spirit also manifested itself in the apostles.[150]

At the conclusion of his university career at Berlin Schaff was examined in Old Testament by Hengstenberg and in church history by Neander.

[150] Penzel, "Reformation," p. 227.

CHAPTER TWO - THE MERCERSBURG SYSTEM OF THEOLOGY

We turn to the systematic treatment of Mercersburg theology. We will list the various topics which Rauch, Nevin and Schaff considered, and include some of the material written by other authors which help us reconstruct the system. Each topic will be described in terms of its philosophical or theological position.

RAUCH'S PHILOSOPHY

Philosophically Rauch was an Hegelian, at least insofar as his Psychology reflects Hegel's most fundamental ideas. But Rauch's philosophical teacher was Carl Daub, whose mediating position included an orthodox response to Christian piety. Like his teacher, Rauch's philosophical interests tended toward theology rather than toward pure philosophy. And his churchmanship gave evidence to the active confession of an evangelical faith; a faith which in many respects Hegel found superstitious and lacking in the highest expression of rational thought.

Thus it would be more accurate to call Rauch an evangelical idealist rather than an Hegelian. His method derived from the German idealist tradition, yet his confession remained evangelical and Reformed. He believed in heaven and hell. He conceived of God as a personality. He treated sin as an ontological reality. And he believed the Church gave people access to the grace of God through the preaching of the Word and the sacraments (of which there were but two).

But most decidedly, we have no evidence that he treated the Christian

faith as the sensuous pictorialization of concepts which would be best understood philosophically, as did Hegel. Still it was idealism's understanding of the movement of the Spirit in the idea which constituted reality for him. And it was this general philosophical outlook which he wished to promote in America over the generally Lockean questions of empirical truth supported in their modified form by common sense realism. The question becomes, did Rauch, as he claimed in his Psychology (p. v), "unite German and American mental philosophy?"

The answer appears to be no. The most that we can say is that Rauch learned to be sensitive to his predominantly English theologically-informed culture. But even as a young professor at Mercersburg Seminary he embroiled himself in controversy (it appears to have been mild) by replacing the traditional American curriculum with a specifically German academic program (thus alienating his American colleague Lewis Mayer).

To his contemporaries, that is those who did not oppose him, Rauch's philosophic distinction seemed to be his emphasis on the "real" over the "phenomenal." This was the assessment of James Good. Good reported that Rauch remained ultimately "subjective" in spite of a predominantely "objective" philosophy in America. Good meant by this that Rauch was interested in the inward reality of the world; its idea or the principles which determine the constitution of things. Americans, on the other hand, tended in Good's eyes to be more interested in practical questions of sense experience.[151] And later Appel wrote similarly that Rauch's battle with American philosophy led him to seek America's philosophical reorientation away from the "phenomenal" world to the "real" world of ideas.[152]

[151] Good, History, p. 106.

[152] Appel, The Life, p. 107.

Rauch did not actually "unite" or incorporate his evangelical idealism with American realism. Instead he sought to promote German learning by "awakening" Americans to the result of a philosophy which he believed dichotomizes things into the real world of sense and the dangerously slippery world beyond the senses. Thus he never dismantled, for example, the position of faculty psychology, but instead offered his own (idealistic) unified psychology. His contribution was the warning that the distinguishing of things according to sense impressions restricts human knowledge and leads to skepticism and agnosticism, especially in matters relating to God.

This approach found appeal at three levels. It solidly affirmed the Christian world-view. It solved some of the problems of faltering Calvinism by being both scientific and Reformed. And it was happily German, for those in the GRC who saw the growing minimization of their cultural contribution in the face of the influence of English culture upon American life.

However, Rauch was not offering a unique synthesis of two systems. Nor was he presenting a new philosophical genre. Rauch's evangelical idealism may have been unique in America, but this did not result from his struggle with the common sense philosophy or with the ideas of Locke, Hume of Edwards. Rather it was the natural expression of his German idealistic training as it met the situation of a new cultural and philosophical context. Yet this experience may have given Rauch the freedom and the direction such that he could express his views virtually unopposed. (Since very few American scholars knew what he was talking about.)

Where Rauch can be seen to be sensitive to his American context is in his own practice of Christian piety and churchmanship (which was very acceptable to all, indeed a model to the fathers of the GRC as well as the

Presbyterian titans at Princeton). Rauch was offering the most orthodox expression to a philosophical form which had been getting bad press in America. Thus he represented an apologist for the GRC to the often hostile and theologically Congregational and Scotch Presbyterian majorities.[153]

In Rauch's evangelical idealism, reason is absolutely trustworthy and, in harmonious cooperation with the mind and the senses, completely capable of understanding the natural world and its laws. Because of reason, modern science can describe the world. But as reason takes shape in each one of us, it must contend with the passions. Thus reason is not infallible in individual experience. Nor is reason completely trustworthy in matters of morality and spirituality, where the passions often dominate. While reason is an autonomous living, universal reality, closely related to the mind of God, it has certain limits. Reason, as it comes to expression in individual consciousness, is, by virtue of its taking form in nature, limited to knowledge of the natural world. Thus reason is no substitute for faith in matters of religion.

That does not mean that reason and faith are at war. Rather, they both serve the purpose for which they exist. Reason provides knowledge of the natural world, and faith provides knowledge of the spiritual world.

Unlike faculty psychology the mediating principle for knowledge is not sense experience but reason for natural knowledge, and faith for spiritual knowledge. Whenever reason is used to reject the existence of Christian truth, says Rauch, it is being misapplied. The error is in making reason, which "is the highest gift we possess in the state of nature" authoritative

[153] In spite of Princeton's confessed confusion over Rauch's Psychology he is nevertheless praised by them as a pious and devout man of God and a model of scholarly Christian leadership. In James W. Alexander, "Rauch's Psychology," rev. of Psychology; or a View of the Human Soul:, by Frederick A. Rauch, Biblical Repository and Princeton Review, 12 (1840), pp. 393-410.

for the state of grace. Faith, not reason, must function as ultimately authoritative in giving us the knowledge required to enter heaven.[154]

On the other hand, Rauch is thoroughly modern in his sharing with common sense realism the anthropomorphic starting-point. Both share a sense of beginning with human experience. Both reject "blind faith," and the medieval idea of the rote acceptance of the Church's doctrinal authority, as well as the criticism of recent Protestant Calvinism's equally uncritical justification of its theological system. Indeed, both believed that the faltering Calvinist system was guilty of forcing adherents simply to "believe" and not to try to "understand."

Yet Rauch maintained that his evangelical idealism would not lead to deism or skepticism as did many forms of realism. While the human was the starting point for his system, it was reason, as apprehended in self-consciousness, and not sense experience which constituted his true starting point. It was reason which led to the knowledge of the world as well as to the knowledge of God. In this concept of reason Rauch is very much like his teacher, Daub, and Daub's teacher, Hegel.

Now with strict Hegelian idealism, reason is supreme. However, for Rauch reason is supreme only in the realm of nature. Nature, with man, is fallen and reason with it. Yet, at this point Rauch does not abandon his rational epistemology (or phenomenology) to the dogmatism of the Church as it may seem. In order to "prove" the limits of reason he turns again to experience as analyzed by the school of German idealistic philosophy. Here he applies the principle of inward organic development (probably

[154] Frederick A. Rauch, The Inner Life of the Christian, ed. the Rev. E.V. Gerhart (Philadelphia: Lindsay and Blakiston, 1856), pp. 18-19.

Schleiermacher's).

Reason, says Rauch, can supply us with the "force" of the argument for a world not perceived by the senses, because the invisible world can be inferred by reason to be participating in the organic structure of nature.

Rauch maintains that reason apprehends an unseen power or telos in, for example, an ordinary seed, like the seed of a vegetable. The unseen power makes the seed take its shape according to a pre-existent form which is somehow invisibly prefigured in the seed itself.[155]

Yet Rauch's argument is not what one might call an "orthodox" teleological argument for the existence of a transcendental object. As an argument for reason's apprehension of the invisible world it is purely negative. He does not maintain that reason apprehends the transcendent object or end to which things move. Rather, reason apprehends that what gives organic objects their form is missing from reason's experience. Reason supplies no knowledge, only the admission of a missing link, so to speak. At that point, says Rauch, faith must take over. For faith gives us the invisible world of which reason has only an inkling.

Rauch writes of the experience whereby reason discovers the invisible world:

> From this phenomena [sic] we conclude upon the power itself, though our own senses cannot perceive it, nor reason demonstrate it. Here, then, begins the sphere of faith - not of the faith of the Christian but of common faith.[156]

Rauch also applies this organic teleological principle to human

[155] Rauch, "Faith," p. 88.

[156] Rauch, "Faith," p. 88.

psychology. As a human being yearns for an end which transcends or at least "fulfills" his life, he can recognize an impulse, force or power which drives him to that end. The desire of the soul for eternal happiness requires a place beyond our sense experience, a heaven. To recognize this truly "is to believe in that home."[157] And the "faith" which exercises that belief in the pursuit of these desires is a power of the soul, which, to a more or less degree, receives its direction from the Holy Spirit.

The existence of invisible forces in physical organic life, as well as in social and psychological life, provides Rauch with the development of his argument from natural reason to faith.

Since we must "believe" in the force that brings, for example, an acorn to an oak, and are thus exercised in the practice of faith even in the natural world, we may reasonably suspect an entire world of forces which are outside our sense experience. Yet as reason is the necessary vehicle for natural knowledge, only faith can provide the true nature of the spiritual world. Reason can only convict us of our need for real spiritual knowledge.

Thus unlike realism, the world is not divided by sense objects and that which is outside of the senses (which in some forms of realism is nothing at all). Instead the world is divided by physical and spiritual reality. Yet unlike classical dualism, the romantic (humanistic) theme of German idealistic theology puts humanity at the center of reality's ontological cleavage. For Hegel, classical dualism was purely a dogmatic construction not unlike a myth. Hegel's world was undivided. Reality is a single whole which, in conjunction with human consciousness, manifests

[157] Rauch, "Faith," p. 89.

itself into its parts. Furthermore, spiritual manifestations are totally apprehendable by human reason, whose function it is to show scientifically how real transcendent (invisible) forces become immanent. Thus the direction of human experience is not down and up, from heaven to earth and back again, but horizontal. The divine is not outside our experience but within.

Rauch follows Schleiermacher here more than Hegel, in allowing the question of the Absolute to remain a mystery - thus giving tantamount acceptance to some form of the Absolute's ultimately unknowable existence. The source of spiritual reality comes from outside (above) and mingles with the sentient humanity. For Rauch, as a theologian of the Mediating school, it happens for us because of Christ. Without the incarnation, the spiritual could have no meaning for creatures. For while natural faith might convince us of our ignorance of unseen forces, without Christ there would have been no reconciliation of God with humanity, thus no source whereby faith could become knowledge of the spiritual world.

RAUCH'S CONTRIBUTION

Rauch was the first American to offer this organic principle as the solution to the breach of reason and faith. Nevin picked up the theme from Rauch and his reading in the German church historians, while Schaff surely got it while in Germany. Indeed, Nevin was well aware of Rauch's connection with the Mediating school. He says that while Rauch appeared a full-blown Hegelian to his American critics, his language and argumentation was more of the mediating branch of philosophy. Nevin believed that Rauch took his departure from Hegel where Hegel could not sustain a personal God or the immortality of the soul.[158]

[158] Nevin, "Eulogy," p. 457.

Nevin also concluded that Rauch's Psychology was sensitive to American philosophy in only the most limited sense. Yet he applauds it as a completely "original" work. No doubt this was due to his having seen nothing like it in English before.

Nevin's analysis of the Psychology picks up Rauch's anthropomorphic starting point. And what pleases Nevin most is the way in which this approach makes the religion of the "mind" become real in human "Life."

Yet Nevin is vague as to how German and English skepticism are distinct from each other in Rauch's book. Clearly this is because Rauch makes no distinction, and Nevin himself may not have been certain as to their differences. Instead, Nevin goes along with Rauch in lumping Kant with Locke, Reid and Stewart. German and English skepticism are treated along with the idealism of Schleiermacher and Hegel. And Nevin's naive assessment is that realism and idealism simply carry their philosophies to the extreme. For Nevin, Rauch ably supplies a middle path. And while Nevin sees at work in Rauch the very mind of Hegel and Schleiermacher, he credits Rauch with not being seduced by their "transcendentalism." His originality, says Nevin, is that Rauch has balanced the idealist's views with those of the best views of "Locke, Reid, Stewart and Brown." Nevin writes:

> Such a work too, well executed, may be expected to answer a most important practical purpose, in counteracting and correcting the onesidedness of both these antagonist tendencies of the time . . . and reconciling and bringing together what there may be in them separately of truth and right.[159]

But in fact Nevin may have read an English and Scottish influence into Rauch's thoroughly German philosophically motivated anthropocentrism. Nevin

[159] John W. Nevin, "Rauch's Psychology," rev. of Psychology; or a View of the Human Soul by Frederick Rauch, Weekly Messenger of the German Reformed Church, 5 (New Series II), No. 38 (1840), n.p.

demonstrates this characteristic when he writes:

> Dr. Rauch does not leave the world behind him, to expatiate among the clouds. He deals with man as he finds him in common life . . . . The groundwork of his system is substantially the same indeed, that is recognized generally in the school of Locke. All is made to rest ultimately on the sensuous life . . . . It is by means of the bodily senses only that the soul first sprouts, and begins its mysterious way towards the ethereal form of perfection which it is found in the end to assume.[160]

It may have been natural for Nevin to read a Lockean understanding of the importance of sense experience into Rauch's philosophy. For Nevin, Locke was the Copernicus of Western philosophy, reorienting it toward the objective force of empirical science. And Rauch himself boasted in having brought Locke and Hegel together. At the same time Nevin is aware that Rauch does not really sound Lockean at all. He admits that the Psychology does not engender the "spirit of the Scotch-English Philosophy as this is ordinarily distinguished from the German." Nor does Rauch outline the transition from one camp to the other. Says Nevin, "The treatise does not coincide, in its general line, with the works of Locke, and Reid, and Brown . . . ."[161]

Instead, writes Nevin, the Psychology breathes the air of the "spiritual" aspect of life. It centers in the "real" rather than in the sensual phenomena of life. Thus it goes beyond the purely subjective by understanding life without specious abstraction, life as a living force rather than as an anatomically dissected "dead" subject.[162]

[160] Nevin, "Psychology," n.p.

[161] Nevin, "Psychology," n.p.

[162] Nevin, "Psychology," n.p.

Nevertheless, in a rare intellectually candid moment, Nevin admits that he is more than a little confused by "parts" of the Psychology. He attributes his failure to the system's novel methodology (for English-speaking readers). Yet he is attracted to what he understands is its fundamental departure from the basic core of common sense psychology; the definition of the human mind.

For the realists of the time of Locke the mind was generally thought to be a collection of mental faculties with an assortment of functions. For common sense realism the mind was thought to be self-identical, but still composed of independent faculties all performing various duties. In effect the mind is represented as a complex mechanism for organizing and acting on data received by the senses.

However, for Rauch the mind is best represented by the organic process of developing self-consciousness. Nevin writes of Rauch's theory:

> It [the mind] is one always, and yet manifold at the same time. It developes [sic] itself through a succession of faculties, the higher still infolded in the lower, always becoming different as it expands and reaches toward heaven, and yet always continuing substantially the same. It finds its image in the life of the Plant.[163]

Princeton reviewed Rauch's book the same year. What is most interesting is that, unlike Nevin there is no hint that the reviewer really understood the book. While the reviewer, James Alexander, praises Rauch's piety and faith and writes of his gratitude to Rauch for directly presenting a system which "we" (American Protestant intellectuals) were used to getting from editors and translators, most of which was "either unintelligible or barbarous, if not both together," he has nothing to say

[163] Nevin, "Psychology," n.p.

about the book's central idea or the central ideas and presuppositions of German Idealism in general.[164]

The original parts of his review are a defense of Rauch's orthodoxy to the readers of the Princeton Review, readers who no doubt had been warned against German "pantheism." The rest and greater part of the review are long quotations from passages in the Psychology.

Apparently what motivated the favorable review in the first place, in a journal which had had nothing good to say about the "pantheism" of German Idealism and which, in a few years, would turn completely against Rauch's colleague and successor, John Nevin, was Alexander's profound respect for Rauch's talents, as well as their "personal friendship."[165]

Alexander felt called upon to explain to the religious public that while Rauch's book sounded terminologically "Pantheistic," his friend was himself "a Christian, a supernaturalist, and a believer in Jesus." And with the exception of the book's difficulty with the English language, it was the best presentation of its kind. Indeed, while it represented the field of German philosophy, says Alexander, "we perceive that President Rauch approaches more nearly to the Scottish than the German terminology." And he added, completely contradicting Nevin's conclusion concerning the fundamental difference between Rauch and realism, that it was specifically in the manner in which he "waives the favorite distinction of the Germans between Reason and Understanding . . . " that Rauch is more Scottish than German.[166]

[164] Alexander, "Psychology," p. 393.

[165] Alexander, "Psychology," p. 394.

[166] Alexander, "Psychology," p. 396.

When one reads the Psychology he is struck by Rauch's careful avoidance of literal translations of German philosophical terms. Rauch, who was rather new to English, used American philosophical terms to produced an approximation of the German philosophic system of Hegel. To some degree Rauch had learned to think in English. Yet the chore of lifting a complex German conceptual system out of its linguistic setting and bringing it to bear on a foreign philosophic and linguistic system must have been enormous. Yet his use of the idealist jargon is less frequent than we find in many other examples of English writers' works on Hegel, Schleiermacher and German Idealism. Rauch seems intent on producing a truly English work, at least in its conceptual terminology, while a thoroughly German work in terms of its philosophical ideas.[167]

Yet at three distinct points Alexander suggests that Rauch has raised legitimate questions or supplied better information to questions in areas inadequately explained by Stewart and other realists.

The first case is Rauch's treatment of "Reason." Says Alexander, at this point Rauch has completely changed the language of reason's philosophical description. What had previously been described as the unique powers employed by the intellect in a descriptive, objective fashion are now treated more satisfactorily as a dialectical process.

Alexander writes of Rauch that in his description of the operation

[167] The second chapter of Ziegler's book on Rauch (pp. 45-72) contains a gold mine of examples where Rauch uses American terminology and concepts to explain his German idealistic ideas. In most cases Rauch avoids using the literal translation of a German philosophical term and chooses instead a term from English philosophy which has some corresponding sense. The danger of course is that the reader will think that the terms are identical. Yet a careful reader would have seen that the ideas expressed by Rauch are unique, while the terms are more or less familiar. This, I take it, is what is occurring with our two reviewers. Nevin is catching the subtle distinction while Alexander is not.

of reason,

> there is a considerable departure from that phraseology which has become common since Stewart wrote; and the author has exercised an undoubted right; for the limitations given to several old terms in the language of metaphysics have by no means gained the universal suffrage of scholars in their favour [sic].

Alexander continues to say that Rauch introduces the term "General Feeling" as an example of his dialectical idealism and as an example which demonstrates his departure from identifying mental operations as separate faculties of particular organs. Rauch writes that the "General Feeling" is

> the inner source of all the senses, employing no distinct organ, and applying itself to no object without, but reporting to the living being, as such, the comfort or discomfort of the entire organism.[168]

Alexander's second recognition of Rauch's departure from Scottish Realism is in Rauch's theory of language. Alexander considers the realists weak in their succumbing to a conventionalist theory of the development of language. Rauch, in contrast, submits what is perceived by Alexander to be a Platonic theory of language (drawn perhaps from the Cratylus). By making language part of "external reason" an objective identity is established between the object and its name. The names of things have a natural association with the things they name by virtue of the identical idea which they share (Psychology, p. 273, 4th ed.).[169]

Finally, Alexander is interested to note that Rauch intentionally rejects the "Scottish Philosophers" who keep will and reason completely distinct in their activities. As Rauch is quoted on page 293 of the

[168] Alexander, Psychology, p. 405.

[169] Alexander, Psychology, p. 408.

Psychology (4th ed.):

> It is usual to consider Reason and Will as wholly different activities, and to speak of mental and moral faculties. But the mind is one . . . .[170]

Here Alexander understands Rauch to be describing his dialectic of identity. Reason, he says, is will with "prevailing consciousness." And will is reason with a "prevailing practical tendency."

However, Alexander believed this to be an over-simplification. Yet he offers no reason for his criticism. Clearly Alexander is unsure how to take Rauch. He tends to see him as a sort of modern Platonist, especially as Rauch develops his organic principle. To Alexander the organic principle comes dangerously close to "pantheism," where the soul and the body somehow share an identity. The strict dualism of matter and spirit is a concept dear to Alexander's (and Princeton's) heart. Yet rather than declare Rauch's system anathema, Alexander prefers the tact of pronouncing it obscure to the English mind, adding the dismal prediction that ultimately the two minds are incapable of a final convergence on the theory of human psychology.

Rauch is fully aware that his system attempts to correct realism's tendency towards materialism. And his involvement in the education of his seminary students centered in the romantically motivated desire to bring each individual to "self-consciousness" as a fully realized human being. He believed that the process of that development was completely "natural," as mankind is in the state of nature. But as a being with a soul, the natural development of an individual's education must be an organic complement to

[170] Alexander, "Psychology," p. 409.

his higher nature. Thus education must reach into the individual's spirit as well. In contrast, says Rauch, the current educational approaches reduce life to purely practical questions of "utility," reducing all to a material existence, where only "useful questions" have meaning.

In the face of the modern contempt of spirit, Rauch would promote education as the pursuit of the harmony of heaven and earth; its reconciliation. And for each individual to have that reconciliation occur within him, he must cultivate the "whole man." The basis for the proper exchange between teacher and student, where minds can truly merge and learning actually take place, is love. Love is the source whereby minds can grow in wisdom. And the fountain of love is "religion."[171]

NEVIN'S PHILOSOPHY

Nevin continued Rauch's educational program at Mercersburg. He also adopted Rauch's fundamental concept whereby faith takes over from reason for knowledge of the unseen world. Thus reason and its relation to faith become the starting point of Nevin's theological system.

However, this raises the question whether Nevin actually constructed a "system." Considering the changeability of his theological position and the fact that he produced no single encompassing systematic work, did he really consider the Mercersburg theology to be a comprehensive system? And even if Nevin did cover a host of major theological issues, does his book, the various articles, treatises, sermons and addresses constitute a system?

Such questions rightly remind us of the variety in Nevin's philosophical and theological evolution. Yet Nevin himself believed that Mercersburg had developed a system. And by 1852 Nevin was able to give not

[171] Frederick A. Rauch, "On Education," a general lecture, Marshall College, Mercersburg, Pa. Winter (1837), Mercersburg Review, 10 (1858), pp. 443-454.

only a remarkably clear and consistent philosophic justification for his system, but a description which, in its synthesis of various positions, demonstrated a boldly practical as well as theoretical originality.

Nevin's statement that the Mercersburg theology represented a "System of Theology" appeared in an undated letter (probably late, circa 1865). Henry Harbaugh had written to Nevin requesting information about the origin and first emphasis of the Mercersburg theology. Nevin replied, writing that the "system" developed without forethought.

> It owes its existence properly not to any spirit of philosophical speculation as has been sometimes imagined, but to an active interest in practical Christianity. Questions of religious life have governed in succession the course of its history.[172]

However, for Nevin, practical questions did not necessarily mean mundane questions. Rather, practical questions were the questions which involved the ongoing life of the Church. It was these questions which first drew the attention of the Mercersburg school.

Thus the system began to be developed as the Mercersburg men faced the problem of the unity of the Church. The spread of sects in America had awakened Nevin to the larger question of the Church's unity. Yet the direction of his approach came from the philosophic base which he had begun to forge in the theological problem or question of the growing rift between faith and reason. So, while the system per se developed starting with the practical issue of revivalism and the spirit of sect, Nevin sought to condition the practical doctrines which derived from his wrestling with such issues according to the philosophical principles established by his theoretical understanding. This philosophic base was

[172] John W. Nevin, Letter to the Rev. Dr. Harbaugh (copy), n.d., Personal Papers of the Rev. Amos Seldomridge, Philip Schaff Library, Lancaster Seminary, Lancaster, Pa.

developed in what must be seen as the first question of Mercersburg, the reconciliation of faith and reason.

Even before meeting Rauch Nevin was aware of the breach between faith and reason. He was fully aware of Princeton's attempt to adjust their Calvinistic world view to accommodate what was being perceived as modern evidences against the orthodox faith. He was familiar with the work of Coleridge and had taken a stand with Princeton against Unitarianism. He firmly rejected deistic philosophy and theology which tried to minimize the supernatural aspects of the Christian faith. Yet it was Rauch who schooled him in the Continent's understanding of the question, and who suggested to him a middle path by which he could begin to resolve the antinomy. This path turned him away from Princeton.[173]

Nevin adopted Rauch's major premise on the issue of faith and reason. Faith and reason are not necessarily opposed. Yet neither are they to be equated. Each functions primarily in separate spheres which have limited contact. Each is self-substantiating. Faith is maintained in its relation to reason as reason rightly perceives what is given for and with reason in the natural world, and reason is maintained in its relation to faith as faith rightly perceives what is given for faith by the supernatural world.[174]

As early as 1839, before Nevin could be considered a philosophic idealist, he reflected a romantic and humanistic quality of thought which had an affinity with idealism. He praised reason as humanity's highest natural virtue, with faith being identified as the true source of moral development. His conclusions were published in an article on the spirit of

[173] Good, History, pp. 116-17.

[174] Nevin, "Brownson Again," p. 67.

the American party system. In it he argued that the political party spirit, like the spirit of religious sectarianism which swept America, was disrupting the country. The first violates the republic's "ideal." The second violates the Church's "ideal." Party spirit like the spirit of sect does not accept the natural unity of reason and faith whereby citizens rise above their private interests to seek the highest good in a moral state. Such a spirit in a country impoverished of faith has led to the deistic atrocities of revolutionary France. Instead, argues Nevin, reason, in harmony with faith, must be the true and patriotic goal of every citizen.

> It is only then by communion with what is absolutely true, and great, and right, that the original grandeur of our nature can ever be evolved, in its full and just proportions.[175]

A year later Nevin produced two series of articles for the Messenger of the GRC. "Worldlimindedness" divided the world's of faith and reason, and insisted that the Christian goal is to live in the invisible world of faith.[176] The other article, on "Faith," represents his straightforward account of how dwelling in that invisible world of faith is possible for the modern Christian.[177]

For true faith to occur in the Christian he must not understand faith as "intellectual ascendancy." To do so is to follow the path of Locke and

[175] John W. Nevin, "Party Spirit" (1839), an address in Addresses and Essays of Schaff, Nevin, and etc. Schaff's personal edition, Princeton Theological Seminary Library, n.p., n.d., p. 13.

[176] John W. Nevin, "Worldlimindedness," Weekly Messenger of the German Reformed Church, 5 (New Series), No. 40 (1840); No. 41 (1840): No. 43 (1840); No. 44 (1840).

[177] John W. Nevin, "Faith," Weekly Messenger of the German Reformed Church, 5 (New Series), No. 22 (1840); No. 23 (1840), No. 24 (1840); No. 25 (1840); No. 26 (1840). First published in the Presbyterian Advocate.

Hume. (Nevin also implicates the scholastic tradition as well as Princeton by mentioning Grotius.)[178] Yet neither is faith "belief." This thoughtless and rigid maintenance of a tradition by which children are indoctrinated has no share in faith. Here, surprisingly, Nevin condemns the very writers who had sustained him to his Mercersburg period. It is Owen, Favel, Baxter and Edwards who represent for Nevin authors in which Christians are molded into the blind adherents of American puritanic religion.[179]

Nor must faith be left to "fancy." Nevin regards the modern cults which excite momentary and fleeting enthusiasm drawn from feelings of either sentiment or the rapture of nature as incapable of originating and sustaining true faith.[180] Yet Nevin cautions that while faith is not "fancy," as "fancy" shares its meaning with "imagination" faith and "fancy" are closely related. Imagination is necessary to move us into the sphere of faith, into the invisible world apprehended beyond the senses. On the other hand, if faith is not kept distinct from imagination, religion stews in subjectivism and romanticism. His example is the poetry of Herder, Wordsworth, Coleridge and Goethe, where poetry becomes "the religion of the heart."[181]

Finally, faith is not superstition as Rome would have it. A superstitious faith

> establishes no real communication between the economy of sense and the economy of the spirit; but vainly labors to scale the heavens, and win the rewards of piety, in the use of means which stand in no connexion

[178] Nevin, "Faith," No. 22.

[179] Nevin, "Faith," No. 23.

[180] Nevin, "Faith," No. 24.

[181] Nevin, "Faith," No. 25.

> [sic] with the interior life of the worshipper, and which can have therefore no moral efficacy, with reference to their proposed end.[182]

Having said what faith is not, Nevin now, a bit too briefly, tells us what faith is. His source is the Mediating thought of Neander and he echoes the now familiar theme of the role of reason guided by faith as experienced in the proper idea of religion. Nevin stylistically expresses how different this proper idea of faith is,

> which is the evidence of things not seen; which appropriates the promises; which carries the will over into its own blessed light-sphere; which purifies the heart and overcomes the world![183]

Nevin recognizes humanity's fallen condition. Yet humanity retains its faculties, its abilities as well as its susceptibilities, all that is needed to "raise [him] to the most intimate communion with God." Such is the condition of humanity's being created in God's image. But the image is spoiled. While all that is needed for true relationship with God is there, it is "deranged by sin and overwhelmed with the rubbish of flesh."

> Now it is the province of faith to conduct this blind constitutional tendency of the soul to its proper end, by engaging the will to fall in with it, under the clear full light of Divine truth.[184]

The fact of humanity's fleshly existence requires that the spiritual journey proceed from the world of experience to a world free from pain and guilt. Religion properly combines the necessary institutional quality with the higher and more inward process of sanctification, such that by faith,

[182] Nevin, "Faith," No. 26.

[183] Nevin, "Faith," No. 26.

[184] Nevin, "Faith," No. 26.

By this time (1851) Nevin was fully a philosophical and theological idealist of the German mediating stamp. He had shared with the now deceased Rauch the desire to harmonize faith and reason. This naturally implied a scientific starting-point (or, as it turned out, an anthropomorphic starting-point). The scientific starting point for theology was human experience, not abstract theological dogma or equally abstract philosophical concepts. Truth and the divine presence could be directly experienced by individuals through the faculty of faith properly cultivated.

Certainly such a novel position in American Protestant orthodoxy needed philosophical and theological (not to mention biblical and historical) justification, especially since it seemed to contradict both the position of Princeton and the GRC. Confessionally both denominations held to what many believed was a thoroughgoing doctrine of predestination. (This is suggested by their Calvinistic allegiance.) As such the position rejected any but the most scholastic understanding of Human freedom.

NEVIN ON HUMAN FREEDOM

Nevin responded by producing what Nichols considers "the best statement of the idealist philosophy as it was taught in the early days of Marshall College, to be set beside Rauch's Psychology."[188] The statement is contained in a treatise published by Nevin in 1848 called "Human Freedom" along with another treatise called "A Plea for Philosophy." They provided the philosophical argument for Nevin's position. (The historical and biblical arguments were more or less provided in his earlier Mystical Presence.)

"Human Freedom" and "A Plea for Philosophy" are undoubtably the most

[188] Nichols, Mercersburg, p. 285.

as sparked by natural reason and imagination, we can exercise an inclination for the spiritual world and by God's grace achieve it.[185]

The issue of the reconciliation of faith and reason remained paramount in Nevin's mind having received from Schaff the more objective principle of the visible Church to balance his inward idealism. In his classroom lectures, more than ten years after his articles in the Messenger, he deviates from Dick's outline (in his discursive addendum to Dick, Vol. I, p. 9) and describes what he considers is the "contemporary problem;" the limits of reason in divine understanding. It was a dilemma brought about by the Enlightenment. The natural world (reason) was seen to be at war with the scientific world (revelation). The impasse had led some to skepticism and others to rationalism. Kant had tried to solve the problem by uniting faith and reason ("I have therefore found it necessary to deny knowledge, in order to make room for faith."),[186] and, says Nevin, "modern orthodoxy" remains to this day committed to this task. The reconciliation must however, accept the dictates of rational enquiry, for that is the fact of modern science. However, any rational method is still expected to discover the supernatural contents of the faith. Says Nevin, faith and reason must thus complement each other. But he warns, in what appears to be a caveat to his students aimed at Hegel, "reason cannot originate truth."[187]

[185] Nevin, "Faith," No. 26. It appears that Nevin has yet to become suspicious of Neander's less churchly position. It will take the influence of Schaff to build Nevin's own objective churchly position and suggest to him the balance between a churchly stand and his emphasis on the inward and subjective side of the Christian faith.

[186] Immanuel Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, trans. Norman Kemp Smith, Unabridged Edition (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1929) p. 29.

[187] Erb, Nevin's Classroom Lectures, p. 10.

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[188] Nichols, Mercersburg, p. 285.

philosophically developed of Nevin's responses to the problems created by the Enlightenment antinomy of faith and reason. He believed that scholastic theology (Metaphysical Calvinism) had failed to sustain the faith and created a blind acceptance of Calvinist dogma. It left modern theologians without a way of thinking through the dilemma. Such was the effect of understanding faith as abstract revelation, along with an unbending suspicion of rationalism.

Rationalists suffered as well. Their slavery to reason made faith an empty and meaningless acquiescence to a transcendent or supernatural sphere or deity. Their leap to "faith in God" was motivated by a lack of means to appropriate real evidence of divine participation in the world. "Human Freedom" was his attempt to provide a philosophical justification for the real participation of individuals in the actual life of God.

Philosophically then, "Human Freedom" blended what was effectively Hegel's philosophy, with its noticeably Kantian language, with a mediating piety in understanding the question of freedom and law.[189]

In "Human Freedom" Nevin's philosophical idealism understands the world as dialectical, being composed of both form and content and including the principles of universality and particularity in every aspect of life. As such all of life is both ideal and actual. But the ideal and actual do not exist independently of each other. The ideal and actual are the way one properly speaks of the two characteristics at work as the idea becomes actual and the actual ideal. Such is the way form becomes content and content becomes form. And inasmuch as content is required to give meaning

[189] Likewise Nichols has recorded "a conservative Hegelian ethic" at work in "Human Freedom." In Nichols, Romanticism, p. 179. That Nevin speaks of the "autonomy of the will" should however not be seen as having any ultimate agreement with Kant's necessary antinomy of law and moral freedom. It was the post-Kantian idealist's role to reconcile what was to them (and to Hegel) a false antinomy.

to form, the content is form self-distinguishing itself. Likewise content negating itself (identifying itself with a general or universal idea of itself) is content becoming form.

All of life subscribes to this dialectic. All of life exists as an harmonious polarity of opposites which do not contradict themselves. Rather they reveal the inner nature of reality by providing the immanent distinctions by which all of reality differentiates itself. This inner nature is the "bond" between the poles of reality.

The inner bond of nature is an organic bond. It exists both within the immanent logic of reality and within experience as we find it in all of nature.

In every example of organic life the poles of individuality and universality are evident. Each plant, for example, is distinct from every other plant, yet it is by definition identical in its species. Thus whether organic or inorganic, in every case of nature and in the moral sphere, form and content exist as harmonious opposites providing universality and particularity and thus, in the way of idealist thinking, freedom and necessity (freedom and law). Yet at the same time only by way of conscious thought, as it exists exclusively in mankind, is this concept possible. Nature cannot be said to perceive the simultaneous character of its particularity and its universality. Only mankind is capable of such self-reflection.

Thus only humanity distinguishes itself from nature, while identifying itself with its species, as it "becomes complete at last, in the form of self-conscious, self-active spirit." In this Nevin establishes the poles of law and freedom in human moral behavior: content, as the individual is conscious of the limits of moral behavior in the existence of the law, and

form, as the individual is conscious of his ability to choose to obey or not obey the law. Again, neither exists without the other. And since each human act must contain the presence of both, law and freedom, content and form, any attempt to explain human moral behavior purely from one pole or the other will result in an imbalanced account and in a distorted representation of life.

The name of the source of harmonious existence is Spirit, since individual identity becomes "personality" as it becomes conscious of its more general or universal existence. Development of the personality occurs as the individual participates more actively in the universal life of the Spirit. Thus the development of personality is virtually identical to the lawful exercise of moral freedom, since the exercise of the life of the Spirit is a negation of particularity. Nevin concludes:

> The individual life in this form, with a full sense of its individual nature, and with full power to cleave to this as a separate, independent interest, must yet, with clear consciousness and full choice, receive into itself the general life to which it of right belongs, so as to be filled with it and ruled by it and ruled by it at every point. Then we have a proper human existence.[190]

As an American evangelical theologian of the nineteenth century Nevin did not feel pressed to defend his belief in God. That was assumed by all parties, even the deists. Rather, he addressed himself to the question of the day which was, how does the transcendent become actual and thus recognizable to human reason? How can the infinite become finite?

His approach in "Human Freedom" was to describe how human beings of finite constitution can appropriate the absolute character of universal moral law. That is to act according to God's will which is real,

[190] Nevin, "Freedom," p. 7.

recognizable and immanent. Thus he believes he is able to demonstrate how God's absolute will can be freely realized in human life.

He begins with an attack on the realist position. Without naming the proponents of the decretal or scholastic theology or the adherents of the softened Scottish version of realism, he rejects any philosophy which reconciles law and freedom with a purely "mechanical union" of the two. In addition he makes a clear criticism of the agnostic transcendentalism of Kant.

In each of the above approaches the actual reconciliation between life in nature (which is bound by sin) and the divine life, i.e. between necessity and freedom, infinite and finite, is impossible. Each, in one way or another, mechanically abstracts the freedom of individuals in the moral sphere. In each case the existence of freedom is simply predicated by definition and not by "real experience" which derives from the immanent forces which constitute real existence. In the case of the American group of Scottish realists, where a moral faculty or sense mediates moral behavior, the entire discussion of determinism is mechanically reduced to a discussion of subjective psychology and language. As such, the theological realist who sustains the existence of the unseen moral world and the world of "revelation" subjectively adopts these ideas, for whatever reason, without having a "real" experience of them. The flaw Nevin saw in the popular form of Calvinism was that theological dogmas, such as the divine decrees of God, are not derived from objective experience, but from a faulty understanding of human psychology which is supported by an unwillingness to test the dogmatic straw man.

Likewise, in Nevin's critique of Kant there is the stamp of Hegelian thinking. Nevin accepts Kant's insight which is the necessity of obeying

universal law. And he follows Kant's view which is the equal necessity of freedom. He does this by accepting the logic of the "autonomy of the will." He writes: "The will, in its very nature, must be autonomic in order that it may be free." Nevin also agrees that there must be "an objective universal LAW, by which the individual will is of right bound, and without obedience to which it can never be true to its own nature." But against realists, the objective quality of the law prohibits its being merely an "abstraction" apprehended by individual consciousness. And he adds a warning about accepting the transcendental limitations of Kant's "enslaving" categorical imperative:

> Nor will it be possible for the law, in the same circumstances, to acknowledge or respect the independence of the human subject. It must necessarily assume the tone of command, arraying against him the majesty of its own everlasting nature, and with the weight of its terrible categoric imperative, Thou shalt, crushing his liberty completely to the earth.[191]

For the law to be both autonomous and actual it must participate in life at its institutional level, in family and state and Church. The empty category defended by Kant does not recognize the "life" of the law. Only as the individual life participates in the life of the law is human freedom possible. Nevin concludes:

> It is the action of the individual will moving of its own accord and apart from all compulsion, in the orbit of the law, with clear sense of its authority, and clear private election in its favor, at the same time . . . . In obeying the law, the will obeys in reality its own true constitution.[192]

Nevin held this position throughout his lifetime and would frequently

[191] Nevin, "Freedom," p. 14.

[192] Nevin, "Freedom," p. 17.

summarize it in his numerous articles. Again, philosophically it begins with human experience. This puts humanity at the beginning of the philosophical investigation. Human experience itself confirms the "mysterious life union" which holds between "nature and mind." Nature is pervaded by this unity of being, and humanity is at the center of nature, wherein the inward and outward union between nature and mind are consummated. In the moral sphere humanity participates in the divine life, thus bringing nature in touch with heaven.[193]

For Nevin the whole world was held together in its parts "by the presence of a single Divine idea, which reaches its end in Man." Yet it is not a mechanical but an organic union. It is a system whereby things cohere according to the inward power of a shared life. And the proof that there is a higher order than merely nature is humanity itself, whose life includes a spiritual as well as a physical nature. In humanity the natural and supernatural come together.[194]

NEVIN'S CHRISTOCENTRISM

Certainly "Human Freedom" represents Nevin's most philosophically systematic consideration of free will. However, it must be strongly stated that his anthropomorphic philosophy was subordinate to and dependent on his christology. Nevin always insisted that human freedom derived from the freedom Christians have in Christ. And his christology began with the controlling principle of the incarnation. The incarnation provided the point of the convergence of his anthropomorphic philosophy and his christocentric theology. It was because God became man that human life as we experience it is possible. It was over the confusion of what the

[193] Nevin, "Moral Order," pp. 550-1.

[194] John W. Nevin, "Christianity and Humanity," Mercersburg Review, 20 (1873), pp. 467-473.

incarnation did and meant for humanity that the rift between faith and reason occurred. And it was the fact of the incarnation that made possible their reconciliation.

So before Nevin proceeds on any philosophical question there is already an elaborate christology determining the direction and limits of the philosophical enquiry. The fact of human free will can be supported philosophically, but the ultimate meaning of free will as well as the support given it by the philosophic arguments, depend on the historical fact of the incarnation. Furthermore, the framework of the question of free will itself derives from the theological problem which Nevin and Mercersburg delineated within the peculiar American theological context. So it is as much a question of an American theological response to traditional concepts of the impossibility of free will as inculcated by scholastic Calvinism, as it is a description of the possibility of free will in Nevin's christological system. All of these factors contributed to the character of Nevin's treatise on "Human Freedom" and his continued support of the position we described.

Nichols has recognized the incarnation as Nevin's organizing principle. He further notes that Nevin's christological approach contrasted radically with both Princeton's "scholastic confessionalism" and the New England theology of Yale, Andover, etc. Nichols writes:

> The characteristic themes of these rival schools - human depravity and inability, election and reprobation, imputation, the atonement, regeneration - had become stale and worn-out, at least as conventionally treated. Nevin was convinced that this whole habit of thought was 'doomed to pass away.'[195]

[195] Nichols, Romanticism, p. 140.

Nichols continues to describe Nevin as dissatisfied with "the speculative predestinarianism" of Princeton. Nor would he share with many American Presbyterians their "protest" of decretal theology from the point of view of "sentimental humanitarianism." His problem with decretal theology was that it was "abstract." His course was to embrace incarnational theology which came to him from Hegel and probably directly through Dorner and Ullmann.[196]

In Nevin's controlling concept of the incarnation the philosophic problem of the irreconcilability of faith and reason was subordinated to the practically more immediate and more churchly problem of the reconciliation between the theological "givens" of mystery and predestination. Yet again, it was an Hegelian christology which provided the insight. As Woolverton has shown, Nevin addressed himself to this dilemma by arguing that it is an

> absolute Christ who in the course of the history predestines both church and world to unity and oneness with him, but whose operation in this regard remains undefined and concealed, and so mysterious.[197]

Here the Hegelian connection is crucial in providing us with a demonstration of how Nevin applied a Hegelian method without adopting Hegel's emphasis on pure philosophical enquiry. Nevin began with the evangelical confession of God's historical incarnation in Jesus Christ. Philosophical problems as well as theological problems needed to be addressed starting from the confessional base.

The question which must automatically be interjected here is, does not the confessional starting point return us to the unscientific and

[196] Nichols, Romanticism, pp. 141-147.

[197] Woolverton, "Ecclesiology," p. 386.

subjective dogmatism which Nevin found so objectionable in American scholastic theology? Nevin would answer yes if the confessional starting-point did not conceive of experience in an objective and scientific manner. However, if the confession is able to begin with the self-conscious experience of "real" participation in the life of God, then the confession begins with human experience at its most fundamental level. Furthermore, the concept of the incarnation, as the confessional starting-point, is verified in human experience through the living proof which exists within the objective institution of the Church. While the experience of participating in the "real" life of God through Christ is the individual experience of the Church's members, and is thus subjective, it provides the starting-point by which philosophy can proceed to give objective evidence for Christ's actual presence in the Church.

The doctrine of Christ's incarnation is supported if his continued divine presence in the Church is proven. Not that the Church is the "physical prolongation of His proper personal life;" which Nevin believed was ridiculous. Rather, each successive historical age of the Church is an organic development which began with Christ and his Church, so that all of the successive ages which develop from Christ's original organic union with the Church equally contain the continuing life of Christ, just as each successive age of an organic development contains the species of its original form.

Now Christ, as he comes to individuals through the means offered by the Church, represents a completely unique individual in whom human beings can share in the divine life. Indeed the utter mystery of that encounter is so unique and hidden that, as Nevin readily admits, it will always remain a mystery. But, nevertheless, the proof that Christ does dwell with his

Church need not be left to purely subjective opinion. By analogy, says Nevin, the fact of historical organic union is suggested by the scientific fact which observes the way in which an ancient, original seed continues to be present in a flourishing organic species years into the future. Such, in analogy, is the case with Christ and his Church. What the Church's individual members already know to be true according to the inward testimony of the Spirit, can thus be substantiated by objective reason through the use of this analogy.

Nevin draws his conclusion by beginning with his concept of the dialectical progress of history and moves from there to his concept of the dialectical progress of the history of the Church. He begins by saying that the forces of history are understood not by individual acts but by a principle, a Gestalt or pattern, which makes sense of the individual events. (Obviously Nevin, in the way of Hegelian Idealism, assumes an absolute causality operating in history.) History's forces are to be understood by "the general moral existence in which they and all their doings are comprehended." It is the network of inner relationships (immanent forces) which establishes the identity of social phenomena. Nevin writes:

> The invisible here again, as in the case of all organized being, is older, deeper, wider, more lasting, and more potent altogether, than the visible.[198]

Nevin refers to the single idea of the Church which gives it both form and content. The historical Church has for its idea a celestial form which

[198] John W. Nevin, "Answer to Professor Dorner," Mercersburg Review, 15 (1868), p. 595.

in dialectical progression in history constitutes the Church by the same process described in "Human Freedom." That idea has been known throughout the ages of the Church to exist as the allegorical city of God. Nevin writes of this phenonmenon:

> And why now should it be held incredible that the counterpart of all this should have place, under a far higher form, in the Civitas Dei, the Christian Church, the glorious Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ?[199]

For Nevin faith gives testimony to reason and reason gives testimony to faith. Thus, in an embellishment and further development of Rauch's work, he carries on the thinking of Rauch by concluding that faith and reason are not opposed.

Yet in order for him to have made the case for the divine presence of God in the visible Christian Church and not simply in the Church's idea of itself as depicted in its rites and symbols, Nevin had to remove himself from the "neutral" philosophical starting point of Hegel. Nevin begins with the incarnation as confessionally defined. He therefore not only understands the incarnation as containing the abstract idea of reconciliation and indwelling, but he maintains the concept as being grounded in historical fact. The man Jesus who was God in the flesh was the physical embodiment of the divine idea of the reconciliation of God and the world. Thus his objective presence and the subjective experience of individual believers recognizing and confessing him as the son of God, resulted in the institution of the Church. Their common confession of that experience, along with the continued existence of the divine idea in the Church, constitutes the Church's objective witness of the presence of God

[199] Nevin, "Answer," p. 595.

in the world. Thus Nevin seeks to hold to the idea of the incarnation coming into human history independently of human experience and reflection. Yet at the same time he wants to defend the objective truth of that claim according to scientific method by beginning with the subjective claim made by independent witnesses, who, in the course of their confession are mystically brought into communion with the deity and can thus give objective witness to the divine life among them.

NEVIN'S DISTINCTION

In spite of this obvious distinction from Hegel and other German Idealists, it proved too subtle a point for many of Nevin's critics. He was constantly being called a pantheist of the Hegelian stamp.

In his defense against this claim made by Brownson, Nevin outlined his own position by delineating the problem at hand. The pantheist, argued Nevin, claims that there is a direct inward union between God and man, or that there is a union between the object and the subject, such that their distinctiveness is lost. Such a "pantheistic" claim makes man, God. Clearly this is false. On the other hand, to allow man no participation in God is to deny the testimony of scripture and to make religion impossible.

Nevin's approach to the problem is to begin with the firm rejection of the ideas of Spinoza. Creation is an independent and free act of God and not the result of God's "fulness of his own being." Neither does will exist autonomously in the sense of producing its own reason, i.e. it is not self-creating. And there is a difference between the seen and unseen worlds.

> Faith never makes the truth it is brought to embrace; it simply makes it to be truly present, and so authenticates its existence, for the sphere of created intelligence into which it is thus actually introduced.[200]

[200] Nevin, "Brownson Again," p. 309.

Likewise, Christ is to be distinguished from his Church, yet in another sense they are one. Equally, Christ is not his believers, and yet they too are one.

Nevin insists that the orthodox view holds these dogmas to be true. Imbalance occurs when stress is laid on either side. Confuse God with humanity or the world, Christ with his Church, and we have pantheism. Remove God from the world, Christ from his Church, and we have an extreme form of what Nevin calls "dualism" or "abstract deism."

Alternatively Nevin offers what he calls the portion of truth in both. There needs to be an affirmation of both for there to be a complete theology. And in order to do honor to both great truths without shifting the balance to one extreme or the other, it is important that both ideas come to terms with each other by way of negation and dialectical process in which the result is the "higher idea."

Through this process deism is negated and the "higher idea" achieved is "true theism." Deism must be willing to experience this process or it will continue to wallow in rationalistic error. Deism's rationalism forces it to explain revelation without piercing through the barrier of God's ultimate transcendence of all human experience. For Nevin, this makes real knowledge of God impossible.

The American Puritan systematic theology, which Nevin believed dominated much of Protestant orthodoxy, interprets special revelation through the medium of "Scripture alone." In this case revelation depends on a deus ex machina, or a mediating process which bridges the two worlds. Inspiration in revelation is defended as occurring by the operation of the Holy Spirit.

With the strictest form of deistic rationalism, revelation is merely a

product of the human mind. In the Puritan form, which is a softer type of rationalism, revelation is mediated by the Holy Spirit, which is somehow wholly outside the human and yet wholly inside as well.

In the negation and dialectical balance of the two views, there emerges the view that while God is the sustainer and preserver of the universe, nature does have a life of its own. It holds that every act of nature is not the act of God, but that every act has its life in God.

The seeming paradox can only be dealt with by allowing a "substance" which has its life in both worlds and which likewise is not confused with either. It is not equal to nature nor to the person of God, nor to any person of the Trinity, all of whom are co-equal to God and thus distinquished from the natural.

This substance, says Nevin, is mind. Its sphere is the moral universe where, by its very definition, it is autonomous. Yet as having its source in the "Mind of God," it is not self-created. Likewise its lawful activity is self-moving, yet the law itself is continuous with the will of God. A mind which wills that which is not continuous with the will of God, wills what is false and sinful. Nevin writes:

> Mind thus, by its very constitution, is required to be autonomic, self-legislative, a true fountain and source of law for itself; while the law notwithstanding has its ultimate ground only in God, and can be of no force whatever as the product merely of any lower intelligence. Objective and subjective here must fall absolutely together.[201]

Nevin's position is to hold to the distinctiveness of the two worlds of faith and reason, spirit and nature, without dualistically breaking them

[201] Nevin, "Brownson Again," p. 316.

in two. Yet he acknowledges that in the end he is unable to show precisely how the two worlds come together. Nevertheless, he is convinced that the union occurs by way of "inward mediation," whereby the objective sphere in the form of law flows from the subjective will as an organic growth within the individual himself. He writes:

> It is the 'law of the spirit of life in Jesus Christ,' the law as the power of self-moving spirit in the soul itself . . . .[202]

This is true because all human knowledge is mediated by individual intelligence, since truth must come to be by way of particular knowledge. Thus truth is neither created nor completely grasped in the world of sense. Only in God are will and law identical. In God there is the absolute union of both. And because it is only in "Mind" that the objective or divine, as deriving completely from the will of God, comes to be in reality, "Nature itself exists only for mind."[203]

Here it is very clear how Nevin distinguishes himself from Hegel. Hegel's system requires that the ideas which represent nature exist only in the dialectical relationship of Spirit and life. The ideas have their life only as they exist in nature and nature is apprehended only in its idea. Nevin, on the other hand, is less materialistic. With Hegel, Nevin argues that ideas which represent nature have their source beyond the senses in Mind. Yet, as thought, they have their being in the world "by the activity of self-apprehending and self-moving intelligence" of which part is sense experience. However, for Nevin, reason as mind has its seat in God, who,

[202] Nevin, "Brownson Again," p. 317.

[203] Nevin, "Brownson Again," p. 318.

as an infinite, independent personality, is completely distinct from nature. Thus, against Hegel, Mind is not entirely the one or whole of reality which in dialectical process constitutes being as such (which is about the sum of the case of Hegel's alleged pantheism). Nevin, on the other hand, while maintaining the transcendence of Mind, retains an orthodox insistence that God and Mind not be equated in any way except to say that the universal mind has its seat in God.

With the exception of this crucial philosophical or theological distinction, one by which Nevin can fairly be judged to have violated the logic of Hegel's method, Nevin follows the general method of the dialectic of spirit. This is evident in the way Nevin understands the process by which moral truth comes to be recognized in human history and experience.

Objective "Truth" in the moral world, which is under God, is always general. So is law. Yet in spite of the ultimately general character of law and reason, their value and life is not contained in the sum of private opinion, but at the point where they exist beyond private opinion; where their force exists objectively for an humanity organically united into a species, where identity is not derived from self-identity, but from the common experience which all humanity shares.[204]

At this very point reason and law have universal effect and objectively represent the mediation of God's will through organic social forms. These forms include "family, public opinion rightly rendered, art, science, the civil state, the course of history, and the Church catholic," to name a few.

All such forms have their source and proceed from the principle which

[204] Nevin, "Brownson Again," pp. 318-19.

is contained in and communicated through the Church. That principle is the incarnation. Furthermore, it is an organic principle, since Christ is a living substance and personality. And the Church likewise is a substance and a life by virtue of its members, but also by virtue of its secular qualities. Thus each form is a living institution having a "concrete life," and taking its nature from the living substance of the principle of the incarnation. Here we begin to see the emphasis Nevin places on the incarnation for all historical institutions.

Every historical form, to be truly from God, must "legitimate itself by entering the sphere of the life it seeks to rule." But at the same time, the principle of the incarnation completely controls this process.

The principle of the incarnation, as it exists for mind, is the source of true reality, rightly considered, since it is the very principle which brings God's will to possible expression in the world. Yet the principle must become concrete. It needs the mediation of the idea in specific applications and in organic existence to become real. Law and reason provide spheres within which the application of revelation (indwelling) will have consistent and universal application. Life itself provides the medium by which law and reason are applied. Life is self-unifying, taking for itself the forms offered by the spiritual world. Life links the forms in concrete instances without ever losing the sensuousness of its essential being.

The direction in which the institution develops is contained within the form itself. Yet the character of that development is constantly determined by the sensuous variables playing upon the organism's development.[205]

[205] Nevin, "Brownson Again," pp. 320-21.

The extreme emphasis Nevin places on the incarnation for all of life as well as his position that the original idea and organic development of an institution is strictly contained in the original historical phenomenon, and thus the phenomenon's development is in this sense predetermined by the original idea and its historical appearance, demonstrates the direction and ultimate thrust of Nevin's departure from Hegel on the question of Christ's "actual" presence in the Church as opposed to Christ's merely "conceptual" or "figurative" presence in the Church. It also gives us the crucial metaphysical distinction between Nevin and Hegel.

Here Nevin's deviation from Hegel was both quite conscious and quite early (no later than 1848). He writes that Hegel's philosophy makes "the idea the mistress of the fact."[206] For Nevin it is the idea which is paramount. And while Nevin never minimized the objective merit of science which draws upon nature and experience for its facts, unlike Hegel, Nevin did not sustain the complete identity of the idea and its historical manifestation. He, as did Rauch and as would Schaff, placed the ideal above the real.

In perhaps what must have been in part a reaction to American common sense realism (and what may constitute what we take to be Nevin's confusion of Hegel here), Nevin argued that philosophy must move beyond the merely physical. It is the power of the ideal over the power of the actual which constitutes the lasting and meaningful in life. It is "the

[206] John W. Nevin, "Dr. Hodge On The Mystical Presence," Weekly Messenger of the German Reformed Church, 13 (New Series), No. 37-48 (1848), No. 43.

ascendency of the absolute, (universal reason and universal will,) over the force of all that is simply empirical and particular" which constitutes true philosophy.[207]

This critical philosophical deviation from Hegel provided Nevin with the means by which he could explain how the Christian exclusively participates in a supersensuous existence. For Nevin the world of the idea was the unseen world which St. Paul spoke of and which the writer of the Hebrews is convinced exists (Hebrews 11:1). It is the higher order of existence which Christians are called to inhabit. Yet it is not an abstract or ethereal world of mystical dimensions, but a sphere of life more real, more profound than the one into which we are born. Nevin describes this in vividly romantic language.

> Christianity is not primarily a doctrine for the understanding, nor a rule of conduct for the will, but a principle of life for the soul deeper than either understanding or will, and carrying in it the power of a divine regeneration for all that the soul is, or is capable of becoming, in any other view.[208]

In clear distinction from Hegel, Nevin maintains that in the true Christian life there exists the ideal life which, in its being impossible to describe by reason or will, since it is not part of the natural world and thus can only be apprehended by faith, defies Hegel's insistence that the idea become actual and thus completely capable of rational description. Again, for Nevin the world of nature is known by "sense" and "science." The spiritual world is known by faith. However Nevin remains convinced that for

[207] Nevin, "Freedom," p. 36.

[208] John W. Nevin, "Nature and Grace," Mercersburg Review, 19 (1872), p. 486.

God the two worlds are one system. There is ultimately only one economy for them both. Still, he confesses he cannot say how the two flow together. Nor does he follow Rome in regarding faith as superior to science. Each, he says, functions in it own sphere.[209]

Now we can begin to see the important theological departure from Hegel. It began simply with the dogmatic criticism of rationalism's unorthodoxy and weak emphasis on the reality of human sin. Nevin believed that both Hegel and Schleiermacher put far too little emphasis on sin. But he felt that in the Mediating school, Germany had recognized this fact. He regarded Princeton's criticism of his use of Schleiermacher as having failed to see the theological use made of Schleiermacher by those who had benefited from him without falling into his "errors." Schleiermacher was a theological "genius" whose influence on modern theology it would be silly to ignore. And that his own system is heavily influenced by Schleiermacher, Nevin does not deny. Indeed, as to the scientific aspect of his system, Nevin claims no originality at all. He writes: "I am a debtor thus with lasting gratitude, both to the English and the Germans, both to Princeton and Berlin."[210] And specifically, he acknowledges his debt to Schleiermacher, but only as "all the evangelical thinking of Germany, at this time, is more or less, impregnated with the deep suggestive power of his thoughts."[211]

Nevertheless, Nevin concludes that Schleiermacher was not "orthodox." His theological system ran into trouble especially in its subjectivity.

[209] Nevin, "Nature," p. 486.

[210] Nevin, Antichrist, p. 6.

[211] Nevin, Antichrist, pp. 3-4.

Nevin describes Schleiermacher's system as one which is almost "entirely inward and makes so little account of history and the outward church."

Schleiermacher's failure here was corrected for Nevin by the high-church movement in Germany which was indirectly connected with the Neo-Pietism and which came to Nevin's attention most directly through Schaff. Yet he himself wrote that his ecclesiastical theology, which placed such emphasis on the Church, was original to him and came about by his concentrating on current theological problems. He wrote:

> Altogether indeed my sense of the CHURCH, which has become to be very active and deep, has not been borrowed in any direct and immediate way from German theology. I know no writer there, whose views in full I would be willing to accept on this subject. So far as a churchly influence has been exerted upon me from this quarter, it has been mainly through the force of theological ideas, that have served to bring my mind into a right position, for perceiving and appreciating what is due to this whole side of Christianity in its own nature.[212]

In contrast to the perceived subjectivity of Schleiermacher and materialism of Hegel, Nevin preferred the idealism and yet historically practical objectivity provided by the Mediating school. Certainly it was Isaac Dorner indirectly and Philip Schaff directly who influenced Nevin in his emphasis on the objective quality of the Church as an historical institution. Yet unquestionably it was German Idealism which provided Nevin with the type of thinking he needed to solve the theological problems which troubled him. The breach of faith and reason was undertaken objectively with the help of Hegel and Schleiermacher and the subsequent work of the Mediating school. Likewise, the more local problem of puritanism and the spread of sects throughout America was objectively addressed with the

[212] Nevin, "Dr. Hodge," No. 45.

theoretical help of Hegel and Schleiermacher, but especially through the practical thinking of the Prussian high-church movement. Yet even here, it was Hegel and Schleiermacher who had first stressed the importance of the Church's creeds and confession during their tenure in Berlin.

The direct influence of German Idealism on Nevin's ecclesiology was argued by F.P. Ryan. While Nevin retained a somewhat traditional view of the visible and invisible church, he did not set them in opposition as had many of the traditional theologians. Nevin considered the Church to be both ideal and actual, as different qualities of the same phenomenon. Again, the idea represents the possibility before it becomes actual. Each actuality is predetermined in its idea. And the actualized idea represents the will of God.[213]

All of this occurs through the actual historical institutions where God's will is made known to humanity. The Church receives her authority as the representative of God's will. Humanity is free insofar as it may choose to exercise its will in accordance with the will of God. Within the course of history, the Church, as the representative of God's will in society, develops itself in accordance to that will. Ryan concludes:

> Fidelity to God by means of fidelity to history and the institutions produced by it was characteristic of Nevin not only because of his Idealism, but also because of his affinity to the romanticism of the nineteenth century.[214]

Ryan has combined the themes of German Idealism and romanticism in describing Nevin's understanding of the Church, complete with his characteristically colorful imagery and his placing the Church at the

[213] Ryan, "Nevin," p. 48.

[214] Ryan, "Nevin," p. 52.

center of history's development. His idealism melded with the romantic vision of history's upward progress. Indeed, Ryan has rightly concluded that Nevin borrowed virtually all of the concepts with which idealism understood history's development. Yet his romantic direction, at least as it coincides with the direction of the romanticism of high-church Anglicanism, would eventually clash with his German Idealism.

In Nevin's dialogue with the American Anglicans (primarily Bishop Coxe) he forced the necessary confrontation between theology and ecclesiology. The question became, "which came first, the Christian faith or the Christian community?" Idealism would have naturally opted for the faith. The Anglicans were more prone to begin with the Christian community.[215]

However, in one sense Nevin shared with the Anglicans a mutual goal which was ". . . to rediscover and repristinate the ecclesiological, sacramental, and liturgical interest of Classical Protestantism." But here Nevin's German idealistic theology led him to begin with the theological "principle" of the Christian faith which was the incarnation. It was, according to Woolverton, a clear reversal of the Anglican order because it made "Liturgy, sacraments, ministry" indeed "the whole panoply of faith," merely the "outward evidence of the work of Christ." Furthermore, Nevin believed that it was crucial for the Church's future unity that it recognize "that, in true Hegelian fashion, the Christian absolute was everywhere becoming increasingly visible as a higher plane of spiritual synthesis was achieved."[216]

[215] Woolverton, "Ecclesiology," p. 364.

[216] Woolverton, "Ecclesiology," p. 367.

Woolverton is essentially correct in seeing Nevin as a true theological idealist in deciding to begin with the faith rather than the community. Yet Nevin may not have been entirely aware of the distinction. To him the Anglicans did not begin with the community, but with an idea of the community. That is, they too began with a theology, which was a reflection on their experience of God or divine revelation. Nevin simply insists that their idea is not the original idea. The original idea began with the historical Jesus. As the community experienced Jesus, their reflection on that experience became theology.

On the other hand, Nevin's concept of the incarnation derived from nothing other than the historical figure of Christ himself. Unlike Hegel, whose concept of Christ admittedly carried with it contemporary historical perception and thus did not attempt to understand Christ outside of present terms, Nevin believed that all that was contained in the historical figure and more is communicated by the Christ experienced in the present. It was Christ's idea of himself, fully developed, that the disciples came to understand and recognize as the continuing source of the Church's divine nature. It was the way Christ imparted his spirit to the disciples that brought them to the understanding of who he was, and by a similar means he communicates who is today.

Thus Nevin begins his ecclesiology somewhere between, or perhaps outside, the ideas of Anglicanism and the German Idealism of Hegel.

Nevin's most crucial aid in coming to this rather unique position was his study of St. Cyprian (1852). This study led to a series of articles and a way of thinking which represents Nevin's most mature and most original work in theology.

In a manner unlike Hegel (or Dorner), as well as his Anglican

opponents, Nevin maintains the prior existence of the Church before all believers. Yet here his philosophical insight is a radical idealism which puts the idea before the actual. In the sphere of nature reason begins with experience to come to an understanding of the ideal. Rationalism has no other sphere with which to begin. Yet Nevin contends that the sphere of faith provides the spiritual starting point which begins confessionally, with the Creed and the confessed belief in "the Holy Catholic Church."

He writes that the Creed makes its claims as articles of faith to be believed in spite of their mystery. In confessing the Creed one acknowledges this mystery and thus attests to the supernatural character of the Gospel given in a natural form. The Church, Nevin concludes, is "Divine."

> It is the Ascension gift of the Risen Son of God. Its functions, offices, and powers, are of Divine origin and force. In this its presence in the world also is sacramental. For is it not the Body of Christ, in and through which He works supernaturally by His Spirit to the end of time?[217]

Nevin does begin with Christ? But it is Christ, the founder of the Church before all time. Christ, as incarnate God, establishes a divine Church before all time, yet in time. And as the Church was instituted by Christ a new dispensation in the form of the churchly sphere of grace entered the fallen world. As such, the redeemed Church seeks to bring the fallen world into its fellowship. In contrast, all of the rationalistic views begin with the fallen world. As fallen, the world is "by necessity" in need of redemption. The savior becomes the means to an end, since something or someone is required to do the saving. Jesus therefore

[217] Nevin, "Answer," p. 582.

establishes a Church for the purpose of saving the world. Nevin, after studying Cyprian, responds by saying that the error here is beginning with the fall rather than with the Church.

Nevin argues that instead of beginning with the fact of redemption, rationalism begins with the philosophic question which Nevin describes as "a philosophic myth" which is in the end, "a Calvinistic or Hegelian necessity simply in the constitution of our natural human life."[218]

Nevin believes the mistake can be corrected by recognizing that the fall will only make sense from within the redeemed sphere of the Church. Within the Church the fall cannot actually precede redemption, but is understood as proceeding from redemption.

At this point Nevin is bringing Cyprian to bear on questions of the unity of the Church in the nineteenth century. And there is some question as to how faithful Nevin is to Cyprian. But Nevin feels he is representing the spirit of Cyprian.

For Nevin, Cyprian can be employed to solve both the Calvinistic squabbles with the Arminians over human freedom as well to resolve, or at least lay to rest the Hegelian rationalistic error.

The rationalistic quest, by definition, must begin with the order of nature. Redemption is thereby understood in terms of divine necessity (the specter of predestination). But that the state of nature was redeemed must imply that nature was, prior to redemption, predisposed or receptive to redemption. Thus nature must be explained in order to make grace possible. Nevin believed this reverses the actual order of events.[219]

[218] John W. Nevin, "Cyprian: Fourth Article," Mercersburg Review, 4 (1852), p. 547.

[219] Nevin, "Cyprian: Fourth," p. 549.

In the actual series of events, the incarnate God, Jesus Christ, establishes a Church with the power to redeem or save a world which is fallen. The concept of the Church as well as the fallen world proceeds from the revelation of Christ and the sphere of grace in which believers share his understanding of the world. Thus the fall is a condition of the fact of the Church.

Nevin's criticism of rationalism reversed the order for understanding the world. By not beginning with Christ and his Church, any discussion of history's development is doomed to failure, since the very idea of history is to restore the relationship of God with man.

SCHAFF'S PHILOSOPHY

Unlike his colleague at Mercersburg, Philip Schaff had little to add to the subject of philosophy. Schaff was a church historian and a principal agent in introducing historiography to the United States. Yet like his colleague, John W. Nevin, Schaff's philosophical and theological identification was with German Idealism as it was practiced by the Mediating school in Germany.

Schaff's German philosophical foundation has already been described. Here we intend to show where it connected with Rauch and Nevin and where Schaff, in his primarily historical direction, distinguished himself as the church historian of the Mercersburg Movement.

We must never lose sight of the fact that Schaff's philosophic training primarily functioned as a support to his eminently practical and churchly theology. It constituted his scientific outlook which he found in complete agreement with his evangelical orthodoxy. Also, Schaff, more than Rauch and Nevin, had a profound distrust of philosophizing to the extreme, especially when human reasoning forgot its pious moorings in the orthodox

faith, and the sobering fact of human fallibility.

It was for this reason that Schaff shared with Rauch (although he had never met him) and Nevin a concern over the role of reason in faith. As a student in Prussia, Schaff must have seriously considered the question of whether reason should replace faith in understanding human experience. He studied under men who wrestled with this issue, and his writings reflect their influence. From Baur he learned of Hegel and Schleiermacher's theories of history, which he adapted according to his own concept of the organic development of history. Neander undoubtedly adapted much of Schleiermacher's thinking and therein influenced Schaff in his own ideas of the Church's development.

The von Gerlachs and the Roman Catholic theologians, including Johann Sebastian Drey and his disciple Johann Adam Mohler (both of whom were influenced by Schelling), and Schelling himself brought to Schaff not only his theoretical concept of the future progress of the Church, but gave him his practical interest in the Creeds and confessions, as well as his high view of the Church.

All of these influences issued from a period in which rationalism was seen to threaten the Christian faith. Deism's popular advance, armed with its scientific principles, was thought to reject any belief which could not be confirmed empirically or from reason.

Even in America, Schaff's approach included the insistence that reason and revelation are harmonious. As late as 1882, Schaff published a work in which he stated that there is an essential unity of the state of nature and the state of grace. Yet more forcefully than Nevin, Schaff states in this work that revelation is "above" nature and above reason. However, following the course set by Rauch, Schaff maintained that revelation is not against

nature and reason. On the contrary, he writes citing the words of Horace. Bushnell, nature and revelation constitute a single system of God. And to confirm Mercersburg's unity on this point he adds the name of Nevin, as cited in the Mystical Presence.[220]

Schaff's most comprehensive and systematic statement on this subject is found in, again, a fairly late publication, his Theological Propadeutic. Based on the methods of Hegel and Schleiermacher, yet reflecting more of Schleiermacher's system, Schaff employed what he considered to be a balanced approach to the roles of philosophy and theology in understanding reason and revelation. The understanding of the phenomenon of religion must include both the objective and subjective method.

Schaff wrote that the "Science of Religion" has objectively grasped the essential core of the world's religions in spite of the emergence of a deplorable type of idealism which in its reductionism and distortions has ignored the equally important subjective side of religion.[221] Building on Schleiermacher Schaff writes:

> Man is constitutionally a supernatural as well as a natural being in the sense that he is descended from, and destined for, a world lying beyond the limits of time and space . . . . Religion is the deepest, strongest and most universal interest of man.[222]

As such the science of religion, theology, must go beyond philosophy. In this Schaff shared with Rauch and Nevin the conviction that reason leads

[220] Schaff, Person. The above also appeared in the Mercersburg Review under the title "The Moral Character of Jesus Christ: The Perfection of His humanity a Proof of His Divinity" (1861).

[221] Schaff, Propaedeutic, p. 19.

[222] Schaff, Propaedeutic, p. 63.

the individual to the necessity of faith. Yet Schaff's presentation of this concept is exclusively within the discipline's own definitions. He writes that, "Theology is related to Philosophy as revelation is to reason, as the order of grace is to the order of nature." Schaff calls philosophy the science of sciences. As with Aristotle, philosophy moves from the "particulars to the general." It seeks the underlying laws of phenomena.[223]

Theology begins with the consciousness of God (Gottesbewusstein) and revelation, while philosophy begins with the consciousness of the self (Selbstbewustsein) and reason.

The Bible is the measure of theological truth, while logical consistency and conclusiveness measure philosophical truth. He concludes: "Sound theology must be biblical, sound philosophy must be rational . . . Theology is in possession of the truth; philosophy is in quest of truth.[224]

Philosophy, says Schaff, tends to be speculative and primarily negative in method. Philosophy teaches that reason "may" lead us to God, and that by all rights there "should" be a God, and that God may be immortal, but philosophy cannot say for sure. Theology, on the other hand, is "positive and empirical." It deals with established facts in the science of "Exegesis and Church History." Yet it also has its speculative side in dogmatics and ethics. Here the issue is doctrines and principles, and the program is to establish these doctrines and principles according to the Bible and the confessions. But the program is also to establish these

[223] Schaff, Propaedeutic, p. 82.

[224] Schaff. Propaedeutic, p. 83.

principles before the "tribunal of reason."[225]

In the previous descriptions of the philosophic system of Rauch and Nevin we selected writings which were philosophical or theological in nature (among others). With Schaff we must select primarily from the Theological Propaedeutic which is, as its name indicates, a description or outline of the theological discipline. In this work Schaff is involved in establishing the definitions of the discipline, and not involved in the actual doing of philosophy or theology. Nevertheless he confirms the position taken by Rauch and Nevin, that "There is no fundamental (principle) or necessary antagonism between philosophy and theology . . . ." The two fields develop along different but parallel lines of inquiry. If there is disagreement, "the fault lies not in philosophy or theology as such, but in the imperfection of the philosopher or theologian." And he maintains the harmonious division of the two disciplines with an analogy developed exclusively from his American experience. He writes:

> The normal relation of theology and philosophy in the present order of things is similar to that between Church and State in America, i.e., a peaceful and friendly independence. . . . The end of philosophy is to show the need of revelation.[226]

Except in his work on historiographical theory, Schaff was primarily concerned with the practical questions of the Church. The only arguments that can be made of his general agreement with the more abstract philosophical and theological theories of Nevin are arguments from silence and from his background. He never openly disputed his colleague's

[225] Schaff, Propaedeutic, p. 83.

[226] Schaff, Propaedeutic, pp. 84-5.

conclusions, and his German idealistic background supported idealism's phenomenology and method. Indeed, his historical work is filled with evidence of his acceptance of similar insights held by Nevin and Rauch on, for example, human psychology and natural causality.[227] But again, Schaff was primarily interested in the practical questions of historical theology and the GRC's response to its confessional tradition.

In order to promote the GRC's confessional witness to American Christians, Schaff organized and published his journal, Der Deutsche Kirchenfreund. Its format was, again, practical. Schaff hoped not only to awaken the GRC to its confessional tradition, but to promote the best of German churchly theology in America. His first issue began with a confessional statement in which he stated the following:

> And as far as the pivotal questions of the present church are concerned, we confess to that direction in German theology which has happily overcome the popular and speculative, the deistic and pantheistic rationalism; which moves forcefully toward the One universal Church of the apostolic creed (Einen allegemeinen kirche des apostalischen symbolums); which studies in depth and with love the faith of the fathers and the treasures of history; which fights seriously against extreme subjectivism and against today's fever of licentiousness (Zuchtlosigkeit); and which heads toward an ecclesiastical reformation of modern Protestantism, toward a conservative union in spirit and in truth.[228]

The program initiated by Schaff in the Kirchenfreund fell in well with Nevin's program. It appears that the two were immediately drawn together after Schaff's arrival in America in 1844. Their likemindedness is demonstrated by the fact that a year later Schaff published Nevin's

[227] Philip Schaff, "The Conversion of St. Paul," Mercersburg Review, 3 (1851), p. 271.

[228] Philipp Schaff, "Was wir wollen," Der Deutsche Kirchenfreund, 1 (1848), p. 4. All translations of the Kirchenfreund are mine. The spelling of Schaff's name underwent several changes until it became Philip Schaff.

translation of his Principle of Protestantism, with Nevin adding an introduction and a sermon. Equally, the two were critically cast into the same mold and judged to be part of the same movement. Schaff's Principle of Protestantism was criticised as containing pantheism of the Hegelian sort. Many years later, the opponent of Schaff and Nevin, James Good, wrote that Schaff freely admitted using Hegel. Good wrote of the book:

> Thus he states Hegel's principle of history, that the historian should resign himself without prejudice to his subject and let it become a living reproduction of its own according to its nature. We reply that even Hegel could not fulfil his ideal here, for he came to the study of history with certain pre-judgments; one was his pantheism, another his extreme philosophical realism, and a third his lack of historicity. This so-called 'scientific spirit' is a farce, because it fails to note its own predilections and, therefore, blinds its owners to their own errors.[229]

Good continues with an analysis of the philosophic "pre-judgments" in the Principle of Protestantism. He concludes that Schaff has completely adopted Hegel's "absolute" historical philosophy. "Schaff reveals the latter (p. 93), where he says, 'development is carried on by dialectic opposites and extremes' (p. 96), - truth lies not in the extremes but in the middle of the place where they meet."[230]

Clearly Good has done an injustice to Schaff by not taking into consideration his distinctiveness from Hegel. But the fact remains that Schaff, with Rauch and Nevin, would be criticised for the alleged pantheism associated with Hegel's philosophy.

Later Nichols, among others, wrote and clarified the root of Schaff and Hegel's distinction. He allowed that Schaff shared with the "Romantic"

[229] Good, History, p. 233.

[230] Good, History, pp. 233-4.

historians an approach which looked for the objectifying unity in actual historical events and a recognition of "the principle of continuity and unity in the idea of the progress of humanity conceived as an organic development." And it was precisely Hegel, as well as Schelling, whom Schaff regarded as discovering "a clear conception of the interior organism of history." But ironically, considering the criticism of Good, Nichols records Schaff's contention that the philosophers had strayed into "pantheism."[231]

In spite of Schaff's use of Hegel, Nichols contends that he preferred the more orthodox Neander and Schleiermacher. They "sought the experience behind the formulation of dogma as the essence of religion." But even here, Schaff would remain distinct from critical idealism by maintaining the Reformed perspective on history which sustained the concept of the providential design of God. Schaff held to this condition in spite of accepting the historical models of immanent development which metaphorically depicted history as organic growth and as a river which flows to its predestined end. Thus Schaff could borrow Hegel's "dialectical scheme" but would not remain rigorous in its comprehensiveness.[232]

Finally, Nichols points out that Schaff recognized that it was Hegel and Baur who had rediscovered the subjective principle of the Reformation, which is basically individual freedom. From them, as well as

[231] Nichols, Romanticism, pp. 115-16.

[232] Nichols, Romanticism. pp. 116-17. While it is certainly true that this describes Schaff's unique position with regard to Hegel and Schleiermacher, it is not clear why Nichols sees Schaff's view of providence as conflicting with the scientific view of history's immanent development. And while Schaff's historical dialectic was often an opposition of "alternatives of emphasis rather than logical contraries," so was Hegel's. The triadic scheme of Schaff's historical theory will be more closely examined in the section on Historical Theory.

Schleiermacher, Schaff came to see Christianity as essentially the religion of the unity of God and man. Catholicism institutionalized this understanding. Protestantism de-institutionalized it, making each Christian the conscious agent of the unity. But in the process the new priniciple, pushed to excess, led to the growing number of sects. Schism occurred when the subjective principle was pushed toward its rationalistic extreme. The emphasis on individual freedom led to scholasticism. Nichols writes of Schaff's theory,

> Schaff regarded the intellectualization of religion in orthodoxy as a degeneration, but did not follow the logic of his own argument and admit it as a step toward rationalism.[233]

Instead, writes Nichols, Schaff saw the pietistic reaction in Germany as anti-intellectual, which led to the loss of the confessions of the Church. Such a loss led also to the failure of authority. Yet in America Puritanism and sectarianism were their own peculiar reaction to subjectivism.[234]

[233] Nichols, Romanticism, p. 122.

[234] Nichols, Romanticism, pp. 122-23. However, we do find Schaff's logic to be consistent with his modified outline of the Hegelian historical dialectic, but only when taken in the full scheme of Schaff's historical work. Nichols is correct to see the development in the Principle of Protestantism as vague. In the full scheme the triadic development, beginning with the Reformation, produces its reaction which was the recovery of individual piety in an active, sanctifying life, and not just intellectual acquiescence to doctrine. Yet at the same time the recovery cleaved to (aufheben) its concept of individual freedom and pushed piety to pietism, such that it negated its concern for outward forms. Yet in the synthesis there was a recovery of the role of reason in religion. The stress on reason, along with the negation of the importance of outward forms, led to the reaction of extreme rationalism, which eliminated the

The distinction of Hegel and Schaff in Schaff's philosophical approach, as philosophy would inform his historical theory, received its clearest exposition in the work of Klaus Penzel. Penzel discovered Schelling's lasting impression on Schaff.

Although Hegel had earlier worked with Schelling to develop their identity philosophy in the direction of objective idealism, Hegel later split with Schelling and developed his philosophy in the direction of objective materialism. Schelling then disappeared from the philosophical scene in Germany only to re-emerge later. He was placed at the university in Berlin in 1841 by the king of Prussia because the king wanted someone who had recognition to curb Hegel's influence. By this time Schelling had developed a new conservative philosophy which appealed to the monarchy as well as to Schaff. We shall consider their relationship in the section on Historical Theory.

Here it is sufficient to say that Penzel uncovered the important fact that Schelling's conservative philosophy supported what Schaff already believed to be history's nature and outcome. Schelling was able to add rational substance to Schaff's vision of the Church's future. Penzel reports that the vision was based on a concept of "romantic idealism." Schaff believed that the apostolic Church developed itself through

> role of faith as the means to encounter God. Outward form and doctrine was recovered, but again, only as intellectual acquiescence. The result of the recovery of vital religion, but only as a speculative discipline, led to its reaction which was traditionalism or, as Bigler has named the movement, Neo-Pietism. The synthesis of the opposition of romantic idealism and traditionalism would recover both the intellectual side of religion and the piety required and experienced in a churchly sphere of grace. Schaff's expression of the final and highest stage of development was in universal evangelical catholicism where freedom and discipline came together in a confessional church united by the spirit of love. Schaff's early assessment of American Puritanism and sectarianism had only come as far as seeing their excessive emphasis of the Protestant principle of individual freedom.

successive ages, the most recent major age of which began with the the Reformation. The controlling immanent principle at work in the Reformation was the Protestant principle of freedom. Having been pushed to its excess, Schaff, in the mediating tradition, sought to correct the extreme with a "romantic" recovery of the pristine quality of the old objective religion, yet with an eye to the future based on the best of scientific historical research. Penzel writes that the ecclesiastical undertaking was one of many such undertakings, all reacting to excessive freedom and attempting to recover what had been lost in the upheavals of the prior centuries. Furthermore, Penzel ties Schaff in Germany directly to the nationalistic group who saw in Protestantism "revolutionary and destructive elements, and dangerous tendencies to licentiousness and dissolution in church and state." It was there that Schaff developed the foundation of his historical and ecumenical thought. However, once in America Schaff adjusted his views according to the realities and new conditions and forces which were at work in American Protestant orthodoxy. He writes, it "was at Mercersburg that Schaff established the 'theme' of his scholarship and churchmanship . . . ." That "theme" was the evangelical catholicism which envisioned the eventual unity of Christendom in a universal catholic Church.[235]

DISTINCTIONS IN THE MERCERSBURG SCHOOL

We have already hinted at some of the minor differences between Rauch, Nevin and Schaff. To call them a "school" is already risky business because of Rauch's early death and lack of lasting interaction with the others. We connect him with the movement only in his setting the philosophic course

[235] Penzel, "Reformation," pp. 228-231.

and their shared German Idealism and geographical and denominational identity. Eventually the "school" would develop much more clearly around the two central characters, Nevin and Schaff, and their students such as Gerhart, Harbaugh and Appel. But this development occurs during the years not specifically covered in this thesis. And the students merely embellished the ideas of their mentors.

Traditionally it has been said that Rauch was the philosopher, Nevin the theologian, and Schaff the historian. Naturally each would have thought to distinguish himself in his chosen field. So the first and most obvious distinction is one of expertise. Yet that does not mean that Nevin and Schaff had given full approval to Rauch's philosophy, nor that Nevin and Schaff had no reservations about each other's views even though very little was said by the men themselves as to even minor differences of opinion.

For the most part the three showed remarkable sensitivity to the other's scholarly and practical leadership in the GRC. In this section we shall, however, raise some clear points of distinction which suggest disagreement in emphasis, direction and interpretation.

In previous sections it was noted that soon after Rauch's death Nevin became more interested in the objective question of the Church. We also noted that Rauch had nothing to say on what would constitute a most crucial part of the Mercersburg agenda, the issue of the unity and future of the Church catholic. Yet it was argued that Rauch himself was considered an exemplary churchman by his peers and a pillar of the evangelical Reformed faith. We also mentioned his dissatisfaction with revivalistic techniques. The fact that his career was cut short allows us to speculate that he would have sought to comment on subjects which were outside the scope of his Psychology and his other minor articles and sermons had he the chance.

Nevertheless, there is evidence that Rauch would have displayed a tolerant latitudinarian posture similar to that of his teacher Daub and the mediating theologians in Germany such as Neander. Thus he may have been unwilling to journey in the churchly direction of Nevin and Schaff. Certainly it can be said that at his death we have no evidence to indicate that he was interested in the confessional issue and he had said little to nothing about the sacraments or liturgy. And while Nevin's interest in such questions began to develop somewhat later, with his "Catholic Unity" and Schaff's arrival from Germany, it is clear that Nevin suspected Rauch of having overemphasized the inward or subjective side of religion.

In Nevin's eulogy on Rauch he confesses that there was a "dash of mysticism in his constitution." But even here, Nevin allowed that it could not be "so bad a thing" as to redirect us from our preoccupation with the "outward" to concern for the "inward." Nevin was more critical of Rauch's use of Hegel. Yet since he is not specific we would speculate that here he is merely reflecting Princeton's suspicion of Hegel's unorthodoxy.[236]

Without knowing how Rauch would have developed his theology it is impossible to say whether he and Nevin would have worked together. Yet it appears safe to say that had Rauch stuck to his mediating position and not conditioned his philosophy with the objective churchly emphasis, as Nevin would, such a serious impediment may have jeopardized their collaboration. This is the picture painted by James Good.

Indeed Good's fundamental criticism of Nevin was his controversial "romanizing" tendencies. Rauch, on the other hand, says Good, was quite nearly a Quaker in his subjectivism. He says that for Rauch reason was merely a channel or avenue to understanding. For Nevin reason had objective

[236] Nevin, "Eulogy," pp. 463-64.

power in itself. This, concludes Good, is the reason Nevin would eventually "place intrinsic power in the sacrament and the church."[237]

Again, Good posits an incredible interpretation which ultimately hinges on Nevin's racial and intellectual limitations (Scottish Realism). But what can be recovered is Nevin's tendency toward objective idealism. Good concludes that Nevin was really a follower of Schelling.[238]

Ultimately Nevin's "objective" direction would carry him even beyond Schaff. While Schaff was not as philosophically astute as Nevin, Nevin could not hope to enjoy a more direct exposure to the mediating theology than the one had by Schaff. Yet during their Mercersburg years, and after Nevin's removal to Lancaster, Nevin pursued the mediating position even beyond many of the mediating German theologians. In spite of no clear hint of a difference growing between the two, Nevin experienced what might be termed a greater doubt with regard to their shared vision of Protestantism's reunion with its catholic tradition. While Schaff became more active in ecumenical activities (which blossomed during his years at Union Seminary, New York), Nevin became more deeply committed to many of the views held by Rome. While Schaff shared with Nevin the dream of catholic unity, Schaff may have been hesitant about Nevin's concept of the apostolic Church's "divinity." Not that Schaff had reservations with regard to the Creeds or confessional witness of the One Church, but that he seemed more anxious than Nevin to preserve the Protestant principle of freedom as it served to remind the Church of its human failings.

By 1855 Schaff had modified the views presented in his Principle of

[237] Good, History, pp. 212-13.

[238] Good. History, p. 313.

Protestantism.[239] With Nevin's increasing interest in Rome and Schaff's revised direction for Protestantism, the two found themselves drifting in different if not overtly conflicting directions.

Yet during the productive years at Mercersburg, Schaff and Nevin worked side by side. Little evidence, outside of hearsay, exists that can demonstrate fundamental disagreements. Indeed, Schaff joined Nevin at his side, writing in the Kirchenfreund that it is "our" intention to end the dominance of "Ultra- and Pseudoprotestantism" in America by informing American orthodoxy of the progress being made in Germany.

HERMENEUTICS

"Progress" in Germany during the nineteenth century was felt most dramatically in the fields of literary interpretation and history. This led to new interest in the study of language and interpretive theory.

Mercersburg contended that the theory that language developed purely by human convention was false. However, they were equally sensitive to the natural development of language in human society. Mercersburg argued against nominalists who rejected the theory that names or words have an a-priori connection to the objects they name in a shared idea. While names do not in themselves contain the concept of that which they name, the name does elicit a concept from the mind which shares with the object the same idea which is shared by the object and its idea. The name is able to elicit the form of the object from the idea contained in the mind of the namer.

But perhaps more interestingly, Mercersburg shared with certain German idealists their concept of the "text." Mercersburg approached their texts with the intention of sharing the author's "object." They maintained that

[239] Nichols, Mercersburg, p. 9.

textual interpretation is correct only when the reader shares in the idea or object of the writer. Like other idealists, Mercersburg attempted to recover the world of the text, which they believed was the world imprinted on the mind and experience of the writer or writers. This is most evident in Rauch.

Rauch included a section on language in his Psychology. There he shows the influence of von Humbolt and demonstrates his own philological expertise by going into depth on the historical development of the various languages (beginning with that given to Adam by God). Yet again it is Hegel who is his theoretical source.

Rauch is determined to resolve the dispute between the "Nominalists and Realists." How do names or words name their object? Is the name given to objects the effect of the mind's organization of sense experience into thought? Or are the real objects perceived by the senses given names according to human convention and social development? Or does God give man the names which he has since distorted and changed?

Rauch wants to solve the problem by taking no one's side except the side of German Idealism. So he posits an independent substance which is neither mind nor sensory objects but a substance which mediates the single reality between mind and nature. In this he follows the philosopher Hegel by positing the existence of reason. He writes:

> Reason is the source of all our conceptions and thoughts; thoughts are the same internally that words are externally. As reason produces our conceptions, so it produces inseparable with them also their corresponding words.[240]

But again, Rauch immediately tags on the familiar disclaimer. "But reason has not its origin in itself; its author is God, whose will lives in

[240] Rauch, Psychology, p. 256.

it as its law."[241]

Reason is the inward unity of reality. The name, as it becomes the conception of an object, shares with reason that inward unity. In that sense it truly names the object. Yet as the object exists for itself it is external as well as internal. The object remains distinct from its concept in its purely external existence.

Rauch believed that he had solved the Nominalist dilemma by means of the dialectic of inward and outward qualities. However, his Psychology never treats the question of hermeneutics beyond the question of language. We can only guess that he would have treated the question of textual interpretation in another work.

In contrast, Nevin had the opportunity to extend his linguistic understanding (which he shared with Rauch) into the field of hermeneutics. One of his earliest philosophical works was a published address on language delivered to the Goethean Literary Society of Marshall College (1842). From his first arrival at Mercersburg Nevin was interested in demonstrating his interest in German language and culture. In this work he credits the Germans, especially the romantics, with the major breakthrough in recent linguistical studies.[242]

It appears that at some point, probably while at Pittsburgh, Nevin had become dissatisfied with the rationalistic hermeneutics of Germany. In his biographical reminiscences he writes that he began to distrust the "text-book" hermeneutics of the grammatico-historical school. He wrote that the school taught that,

[241] Rauch, Psychology, p. 256.

[242] John W. Nevin, "The German Language," Weekly Messenger of the German Reformed Church, 8 (New Series), No. 1 (1842), p. 1460.

> All human language . . . must be interpreted according to its grammatical or literal sense; and what that is in any case is a purely historical question, a question of outward reality and fact, to be determined by purely historical evidence.[243]

In fact, says Nevin, the historical sense of words is much more than what is recorded in grammars and dictionaries. Language draws its meaning from "the life and spirit," which is given it in its use.

By the time of his address to the Goethean Literary Society he had taken Rauch's argument to heart. He credits the recent Germans with not succumbing to the illusion in the Nominalist dilemma. To take either side, he says, implies that "the mind might be developed to some considerable extent, before the use of language was enjoyed." In either case "the relation between speech and thought is taken to be merely external." Nevin concludes, man did not invent language. Yet neither is it some instrument "furnished ready made by God." Language is part of the soul's life. The soul grows in both "thought and speech."[244]

Thus there is a universal relationship between thought and speech. Every word uttered, in order for it to be true, must have as well an inward word. He writes much later in life:

> All spoken or written language is formal over against the inward sense it is designed to express, and this sense then is the matter of substance, without which the form of its utterance would be of no account whatever.[245]

The dialectic of inward and outward is intrinsic to language. And as with all of life it is an "organic" connection.

[243] Nevin, Life, p. 129.

[244] Nevin, "Language," p. 1460.

[245] John W. Nevin, "Christ and His Spirit," Mercersburg Review, 19 (1872), p. 353

Therefore, in the study of language, where what is sought are universal laws or principles which apply, the scientist must not only observe the language's outward development, but he must include the soul's "nisus" to become what is its true nature. The external development of language can be understood in its variety as the soul's evolution according to the conditions and circumstances in which it finds itself. Nevin concludes:

> Language is the life of the soul, externally considered. To study language then, is to study the soul itself, under one of the manifold forms in which it is found struggling to bring its secret nature into light.[246]

The inward and outward dialectic remains central in Nevin's theory of textual interpretation. For him the dialectic exists in "text" and "sense," i.e., the text itself and its sense. His criticism of certain rationalistic approaches was that the text was treated apart from its sense, therefore an arbitrary principle of pure externality is mechanically presumed of the text as object. For Nevin, text and sense were as intimately joined as "body and soul."

In this understanding Nevin develops what appears to be something similar to Schleiermacher's idea of interpretation as sharing with the writer his experience. For example, on poetry he writes:

> Only so far as the inspiration of the poet brings his readers into felt communication with the higher element of his own life, so that it works in them, as it were, by spiritual infection, and they also become poets with him in their secondary degree and measure - only so far, and no farther, can his language be said to have entered into their minds in its true historical sense.[247]

[246] Nevin, "Language," p. 1460.

[247] Nevin, Life, p. 133.

Naturally Nevin will carry this idea into his theory of biblical interpretation. "Real speech" is only possible as the spirit "embodies" itself in words. Says Nevin, in inspiration the "mind of God" is actually "lodged" in the Word of God. In the spirit's embodiment in words the "divine element" and the "human element" come together. In their union the written or spoken word is presented to be apprehended. Apprehension of the divine word is only possible when the reader or hearer experiences both dimensions of the word. Nevin concludes that there is in mankind,

> an original capacity for perceiving the Divine, an organ for the apprehension of the supernatural, when it is brought near to him in such objective form. Awakened into exercise, this power is what we call faith. Between faith and the supernatural element of God's word there is an original, necessary correlation; whereby as light and the age that sees it are for one another in the world of nature.[248]

Again, in terms of understanding a text, Nevin argues that no sense can come from merely reading the text. He maintains that every text has an inward form which must be grasped in order to get the text's meaning. And his examples are again poetry, where "only a poetic spirit" will "do justice" to the poetry, and philosophy, where he argues that "to all unphilosophical minds, the speculations of Kant or Hegel are as a matter of course irredeemable nonsense."[249]

The same can be said for the word of God. It is inconceivable, says Nevin, that written or spoken words can of themselves convey revelation. Only as the living soul is already in some "rapport" with the revelation will the divine sense be apprehended.[250]

[248] Nevin, Life, p. 136.

[249] Nevin, "Christ," p. 353.

[250] Nevin, "Christ," p. 354.

The idea of having "rapport" with the author of a text was equally important to Schaff. And as with Nevin it is historical study which can develop this rapport. Schaff's hermeneutical method is clearly demonstrated in another paper given to Marshall's Goethean Literary Society, this one titled "The Divina Commedia." The hermeneutical approach used by Schaff in interpreting Dante's poem historically was admittedly borrowed from Schelling and Hegel, co-authors of the Critical Journal of Philosophy, Vol. II, (no date given). Schaff shares with Schelling the first principle of determining the underlying development of the text's consciousness as the development of history's consciousness as it culminates in Dante's personal experience.[251]

Schaff's interpretive method, as an historian, is to seek the "object" of the poem. In order to do that he applies what he calls an "immanent" critique. By way of subjective experience, the soul's history mirrors the history of the world by making the experience of it objective. Identity is established where the personal thoughts and longings of Dante come to be recognized as the form of experience, thus making clear to the reader what late medieval Catholicism was about. Schaff writes:

> On this way toward saving knowledge [sic] man is not left to himself, but on the contrary he has for his guide history or tradition in its widest and best sense, which God himself uses as his instrument.[252]

Like Nevin, Schaff does not treat the text as purely "object." The text is seen to contain or convey the author's "consciousness" which is itself a "mirror" of historical experience. Only as the interpreter understands this inward principle is the text properly interpreted in its

[251] Schaf, "Divina," p. 40.

[252] Schaf, "Divina," p. 39.

full historical sense.

HISTORICAL THEORY

German "progress" in hermeneutical science went hand in hand with progress in historical science. Mercersburg articulated their theory of historical development based on the same concept of organic growth which described the development of language. In this they shared the method of the Mediating school. Yet they added their own perspective or twist which developed in the peculiarities of the American denominational system. This twist was their practical emphasis on the actual Church as the authoritative confessional body of Christ and the American system itself, which, in its separation of the Church from the state, provided the Church with the freedom it needed to develop itself according to the spirit's design.

The organic model was based on the theory that the progress of history is continuous and, with the exception of God's direct intervention, moves by means of the forces contained within it. Thus reality is constituted in history's self movement. Historical knowledge develops from the correct, scientific understanding of that movement. At the same time, Mercersburg held that within the rational development of history, a supernatural agent is at work. This agent does not disrupt history's lawful course, but rather draws history towards its pre-determined end. Yet, in spite of retaining the concept of divine providence, Mercersburg committed themselves to a theory which at the scientific level made history the ultimate source of the knowledge of human development and progress. Thus Mercersburg must be placed among those thinkers and movements of the eighteenth and nineteenth century who are praised or criticised for their elevation of history to the position of supreme judge of the human condition. As the philosopher

Richard Rorty has observed,

> Since Hegel, we have had a series of philosophical movements which tried to historicise epistemology, seeing in history the same sort of sovereign arbiter that earlier philosophers found in God or Nature.[253]

Clearly Hegel was a major source of Mercersburg's theory of history. Schaff had picked up the concept of dialectical progress from the Hegelians Baur and Tholuck. And Schaff, with Tholuck, had no compunction about admitting his source. He even went so far as to adopt Hegel's speculative categories along with his historical method. Both Schaff and Tholuck were convinced of the reliability of the system, and where it fell into "errors" they abandoned it. With St. Paul Schaff could aver "all is yours" as long as one remembered, "And you are Christ's."[254]

Although Schaff's historical works, such as What Is Church History?, often omit references to Hegel, there is a direct connection to Hegel's lectures on the philosophy of history, which suggests just this second hand borrowing through Schaff's teachers. But Schaff did not borrow uncritically. Under Baur Schaff began to modify the Hegelian model of historical development. He became convinced that Baur was not true to the best concept of development. The proper development of dialectical negation held intact the original character of the previous historical form, while evolving itself into a higher stage of development. Schaff believed that Baur's model suggested changes in the original form as it developed through the successive stages of its growth. This violated history's true

[253] Richard Rorty, "Life At the End of Inquiry," rev. of Realism and Reason: Philosophical Papers, Vol. III., by Hilary Putnam, London Review of Books, 6, No. 14/15 (1984), p. 6.

[254] Penzel, "Quest," p. 56.

continuity by producing developments completely contrary to their original character.[255]

Baur's model was most disturbing to Schaff when it came to the question of the historical development of the Church. Schaff felt that Baur violated the principle of history's continuity by suggesting concepts of the contemporary development of the Church which Schaff felt were unorthodox. So Schaff turned to other more orthodox historians whose historical theories retained the Church's original idea within the natural successive changes of the Church's development.

Nevertheless, Hegel was an original source of Mercersburg's historical theory. In one of Schaff's first American papers he began with a long quotation from Hegel which illustrated his general agreement with the latter's idea of the study of history. It is one of Hegel's most popular sayings, and summarizes his view of philosophy as being a science, not of foresight, but of hindsight.

Schaff quotes Hegel to demonstrate that Dante's poem "Divina Commedia" can give us the idea or principle of the age in which Dante wrote. Dante's relatively late arrival on the medieval stage puts him in the position of master of his age. He embodies the historical spirit in this great Catholic poem of the Middle Ages. And his position is a natural one, since the concept of history, or the Spirit's appearance as idea, occurs only as the real events of history are gathered into intellectual form or understood as substance. That phenomenon must have the character of retrospection. The source reads:

[255] Johnson, "Seed," p. 128.

> A bit of advice about teaching others what the world is supposed to become. Philosophy is always too late to predict.[256]

And again, a revealing quote of Hegel which teaches a similar point, yet either poorly translated by Good, or badly quoted by Schaff:

> "The Owl of Minerva," says a deep thinker, with reference to the relation of Philosophy to Life, which she represents, "commences her flight with the first blush of dawn."[257]

In Schaff's analysis of the "Divina Commedia" he employs Hegel's (and Schelling's) method which seeks to discover the historical principle at work in the immanent forces which culminate in certain historical events, people, ideas and works of art. Furthermore, the scientific method is not effective for prediction. While it can anticipate further progress as is history's nature, the details of that future are merely shadows of things that might be.[258]

[256] Schaff, "Divina," tract's cover. From G.W.F. Hegel, Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts, Vol. 8 of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's Werk, ed. Eduard Gans, Berlin: Duncker and Humblot, 1833, preface.

[257] Schaff, "Divina," p. 26. This alters somewhat the meaning of the original. From the same paragraph of the Philosophy of Right, ". . . die Eule der Minerva beginnt erst mit der einbrechenden Dammerung ihren Flug."

[258] Nichols has recognized Hegel's contribution here. He may have also uncovered a discrepancy. Not only does Schaff's concept of the organic evolution of doctrine which reflects the age's spirit anticipate the further development of doctrine, it can supply concrete forms which that development will take. Nichols writes, "Indeed, if some Hegelian antinomy of the Church's movement could be discerned in the past it could be extrapolated into definite predictions for the future. This Schaff attempted with startling boldness, and Nevin followed him, though without his exuberant assurance." In Mercersburg, p. 28. Yet here Schaff seems to be suggesting just the opposite, a rather limited science of "hindsight." Why then, as Nichols has clearly seen, the bold anticipation of the Church's future? It can only be explained as a departure from Hegel and an embracing of the later work of Schelling. This will be examined later in this chapter.

But as we have already suggested, Mercersburg should be held distinct from Hegel in certain respects. With the Mediating school, Mercersburg did not resolve history in the phenomenology of Spirit, but in a personal God who is "historically real and individual."[259]

While Hegel provided Mercersburg with its historical thinking in general, it was from Schleiermacher that the Church's history was seen as an organic development. The Church, like all living things, progressed as it evolved. Schleiermacher's insight was that,

> Christianity as a whole was a new living creation that continued to grow from the force of its own natural dynamism. The very life which the Church carried within itself was in the process of gradual unfolding in the consciousness of the Church.[260]

Furthermore, Schleiermacher recovered the concept of the historical role of Christ as redeemer from its neglect at the hands of the German rationalists. Yet in spite of Schleiermacher's historical insights, Mercersburg would not leave the matter with merely a "concept" of Christ as redeemer, that is, with Christ's "work" of redemption. It is Christ himself who constitutes redemption, such that redemption was not merely "by" him, but "in" him.[261]

Certainly it was the Mediating school who most influenced Mercersburg in their adaptation of the original insights of German Idealism to a more "orthodox" or traditional understanding. Their choice and application of

[259] Nevin, Mystical, p. 28. This is again Nevin's translation of Carl Ullmann's, "The Distinctive Character of Christianity, " Theologische Studien und Kritiken, 1845. Hereafter cited as Nevin, Mystical, essay, p. 28.

[260] Ryan, "Nevin," p. 147.

[261] Nevin, Mystical, essay, p. 25.

the new insights demonstrates that their true interest was in using these insights as a means to an end.

With Hegel they saw Protestant history as an antithesis to Roman Catholic history. But unlike Hegel, their historical work was not purely academic. The Church's development of its antithesis would serve to purify both Roman Catholics and Protestants at the altar of history.

Mercersburg never hid the fact that their historical work was motivated by certain confessional commitments. Schaff wrote of his first book, The Principle of Protestantism, that it was "a sort of scientific religious confession . . . ."[262] Yet they needed the objectivity of science. History became important for Christians because history is the home of the Christian confession. Christian history makes sense of secular history. Apart from the sense brought to history by the Church, secular history strays toward mundane affairs and misses its true vocation which is "knowledge of God."[263] History's practical objective is to incorporate this knowledge into "contemporary church life."[264]

Much later in Schaff's life, long after he left Mercersburg, he clarified his two principles of Church history. The objective principle is the person of Christ, who moves history to its completion. The subjective principle considers Church history as a "theological science and art." It

[262] Schaff, Principle, p. 35.

[263] John W. Nevin, "Commencement Address," Franklin and Marshall College, Lancaster, Pa., 25 July 1867, Mercersburg Review, 14 (1867), p. 502.

[264] Henry W. Bowden, Church History in the Age of Science, Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1971, pp. 55-56. Bowden is speaking specifically here of Schaff's theory of Church history.

is the craftful description of the objective principle.[265]

Thus Mercersburg saw history as a confessional tool. The project was Christ for the age of reason. As a student of the Mercersburg school wrote:

> Philosophy, science, art, and politics, which, since the age of Constantine, were under the tutelage of the Church, declared themselves independent and followed the guidance of reason instead of revelation. Political and social sanctions were found in the reason and conscience of men, and not the prescriptions of the Church or the precepts of the Bible.[266]

Mercersburg rose to the challenge to recover what had been lost. And in America they were up to such a challenge being gifted with the best of German and American theological education.

When Schaff appeared on the American scene there was virtually no scientific history being taught. History was practiced as "literary art," in which the "disconnected events" of history were arranged into their "essential harmony." Only after Mercersburg's star had long faded in the 1880's was the discipline of history developed in American colleges. So it is little wonder that Schaff led the way and became such an influence in church historiography. But the battles fought by Schaff to produce an historical consciousness in America were hard ones. The accepted view of the day held that Christian doctrine is pristine and unchanging. Seminaries had little interest in studying church history, since it conflicted with the interests of the sectarian forces which controlled them. These sectarian forces, along with the accompanying popularity of revivalist theology, regarded an historical consciousness as conflicting with the

[265] Philip Schaff, "General Introduction," in History of the Christian Church, rev. ed., New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1888, vol. I, p. 4.

[266] Richards, "Mercersburg Considered," p. 124.

revival spirit which they sought to establish as the first "means of religious nuture."[267]

Schaff's approach to historiography, writes Bowden, may be called romantic. But, he continues, his "romantic narrative" was qualified by a method which analyzed the concept of events philosophically. His motive was the belief that purely empirical investigation was not enough. He advocated the "sympathetic union with the subject." Furthermore, unlike other historiographers, he began with the "a-priori conception of the essential nature of the church." For Schaff historical theology was sacred science which presupposed the doctrine of divine providence.[268]

Both Schaff and Nevin understood history in this providential sense. Both had come from backgrounds where one's future was thought to be conditioned by the hand of God. One's personal relationship with God in many ways determined one's future. So it is no wonder that Mercersburg found Schleiermacher's pious church history helpful, especially in Schleiermacher's concept of "individualization," the way in which Christ becomes individualized in his followers. Both Nevin and Schaff had experienced individual conversions as young men. In Schaff's development he recognized Christianity's ability to bring individual conviction of its claims by the process of Christ becoming a reality in the believer. Says Penzel, Schaff recognized the effect of this insight in the "Awakening" of German historical science. It was this principle of individual awakening that conditioned his understanding of idealistic thought.[269]

[267] Bowden, Church History, pp. 30-41.

[268] Bowden, Church History, pp. 43-52.

[269] Penzel, "Church History," p. 236.

In one sense, Nevin's college years were partly spent searching for a theory of history. Later in life he wrote that he, with his fellow students, was a victim of the unhistorical forces controlling American educational institutions. At Union and Princeton Nevin held to a purely "mechanical" view of revelation which saw the will of God as inspirationally dictated and published as such in the Bible. Even as a teacher at Western Nevin complained of a complete lack of history's spirit in the curriculum.[270] Indeed, Gerrish jokes that Nevin admits to only one shortcoming prior to Mercersburg, the lack of a proper concept of church history.[271]

Sometime during his stay in Pittsburgh Nevin discovered church history through the Mediating school. No sooner had he arrived at Mercersburg than he became the first scholar in America to investigate the European history of the GRC by analyzing its "distinctive genius" which existed in the Heidelberg Catechism and its "controlling principle" as it existed in the Apostles' Creed.[272]

Together, Schaff and Nevin raised history to the highest authority for an objective and scientific understanding of the Christian faith. In many ways they began a trend which, while taken for granted today, at that time was highly controversial. Especially as that historical concept led to an equally "high" view of the Church.

THE THEORY'S SOURCE

Mercersburg's high church views can be traced back to Schaff's Berlin years. There he met with a Prussian group of Protestant "High Orthodoxy"

[270] Nevin, Life, pp. 41-48.

[271] Gerrish, "Flesh," p. 55.

[272] Richards, History, p. 277.

who, with other conservative theologians, were gathered under the direct influence of Ernst W. Hengstenberg and Ludwig and Leopold von Gerlach.

It was there that Schaff developed his keen interest in the "Church Question," his convictions regarding the sacramental and liturgical renewal of the Church, and it was there that he developed his vision of the culmination of the Church's future in an "Evangelical Catholicism."[273]

It was also in this German circle that Schaff's romantic views about the organic development of the Church and its final triumphant consummation in the age of St. John were cultivated. Yet it was in America that Schaff worked these ideas out for himself. The organic principle carried with it the idea of unity with the past and distinctiveness with regard to the future. It was none other than the practical implications of Hegel's concept of aufheben, or sublation.

The organic concept came into direct conflict with an American concept of history which understood Christian doctrine as existing, fully developed, in the first century. Nevin had to warn his students at Mercersburg away from this view as presented in Dick's theology. At Princeton and Western, where Dick was a standard text in theology, students were instructed that highly developed doctrines were presented to the pagans by the first century preachers. Nevin lectured his students at Mercersburg that early Christian religion had no form, but developed by a slow, painful "organic" process.[274]

Nevin's philosophical articulation of history's progress had the mark of Hegel's phenomenology. The mark is none other than a similar concept of sublation which makes change continuous and not arbitrary. He wrote that .

[273] Penzel, "Reformation," p. 221.

[274] Erb, Nevin's Classroom Lectures, pp. 34-39.

organic historical progress takes each stage into itself, never destroying the past, but internalizing it, such that the "whole" continually shows itself "under a higher form, more perfect than before."[275]

Yet equally, each stage is a negation of its previous age. Nevin describes this process in the following terms:

> On one side, the spirit is compelled to forsake the house of its former habitation as no longer suited to its wants; while on the other, it is carried forth, by inward longings, and outward beckonings, after the still unknown future, to which it is thus forced to look for help. In other words the preparation that serves to usher in a new era, is at once negative and positive; not negative simply, and not positive only, but these in union; the old making room by its own dissolution for the birth of the new, and the new foreshadowed and prefigured in the womb of the old.[276]

Yet with Nevin's ever watchful caution of Hegel, he concludes that while we see this organic process worked out before our eyes, we cannot assume that it is the events and ideas themselves that determine the course of history. There is always the unseen, providential divine presence which at every point in human history represents "the mind and plan of God."[277]

For contemporary history, argued Mercersburg, the development of God's plan began with the Reformation. Yet in history's continuous course this development did not spring up without a source. Its parent was Medieval Roman Catholicism.

Schaff, in his romantic fascination with the Middle Ages, rejected the idea that the medieval period was "dark."[278] While Nevin apparently did

[275] Nevin, "Freedom," p. 37.

[276] John W. Nevin, "The Year 1848," Mercersburg Review, 1 (1849), p. 14.

[277] Nevin, "1848," p. 16.

[278] Schaff, "Divina," p. 21. Also Philip Schaff, "German Theology and the Church Question," Mercersburg Review, 5 (1853), p. 132.

not share Schaff's same appreciation for the Middle Ages, both maintained that the Reformation and Protestantism developed naturally from medieval Catholicism.

The process had both inward and outward forces which precipitated the development. These forces and their development into a new historical period were seen by Mercersburg as the lawful maturing and growing of the Roman Catholic Church. Nor is the advance any improvement on the Apostolic faith, but upon the medieval consciousness of the Church. Nor was it a superseding of all aspects of the sixteenth century. The advance made possible the further development of the Church. Nor was the movement meant to curtail any adherence to catholic principles, but that discipline be retained with a new emphasis.[279]

Furthermore, the advance brought advances in secular science, art, etc. Thus the development was the direct result of historical forces and must be seen as necessary, unavoidable and "objective." History, says Schaff, "unfolds itself only through extremes in the way of action and reaction." He concludes:

> A religious principle, once uttered, becomes the property of the whole world, communicates itself like fire to all other departments of life, rushes onward restless and onesided to its extreme consequence; and then, by inherent dialectical process, strikes over into its opposite.[280]

Nevin was in full support of his colleague's theory of the natural development of the Protestant movement. He had been brought up to believe in a "Puritan theory" which held that Protestantism "is a repristination simply of early post-apostolical christianity." But now, enlightened by

[279] Schaff, Principle, pp. 47-52.

[280] Schaff, Principle, p. 96.

this theory of organic historical development, he sought to describe Protestantism's continuity with the ancient Church. His advice to his Puritan readers was, "We are shut up thus to the idea of historical development . . . . Growth implies unity in the midst of change. That is precisely what we are to understand by historical development." And for further reference he suggests Schaff's What Is Church History and The Principle of Protestantism, and Newman's "Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine."[281]

While Schaff certainly corroborated and perhaps enhanced Nevin's theory of historical development, he did not supply him with it entirely. Nevin had been reading the Mediating historians and theologians prior to meeting Schaff. And much of Nevin's early thinking is reflected in his sermon on "Catholic Unity" appended to Schaff's The Principle of Protestantism. Nevin attributes Ullmann and Dorner with bringing him to embrace the concept of Protestantism's natural development from Roman Catholicism. It was Dorner who specifically rejected the Protestant view that Protestantism sprang, pristine and spontaneous, recovering the original faith of the Apostles.

As a natural dialectical development in history's upward course, the Reformation was the synthesis of the two extremes of Roman and Protestant movements which were based in national identities. The papacy is a universal Christian monarchy, whose spirit derives from ancient Rome. Protestantism has its national origins primarily in the Germanic culture. Thus the Roman system is founded primarily in an "outward" way, "as a body of mere rules and statutes," while Protestantism derives from the "inward"

[281] Nevin, "Early Christianity: Third," pp. 32-33.

soul searching characteristic of the German mind.[282]

It was between the primarily outward character of the Roman system and the primarily inward consciousness of the German mind that the "true" Reformation had to mediate. The forces at work were pushing toward the negation of the Roman principle of outward authority. Humanism, pietistic theology, mysticism and the influence and direction of the Reformation leaders, all contributed to the emergence of the new consciousness.[283]

Again, it was not the wholesale abandonment of classical thought which was behind the movement, but rather a new emergence which in all of its various manifestations carried within it the one principle of the liberation of human freedom, thinking and science. Yet not a liberation without discipline, but one that was governed by the recovered emphasis of the objective authority of God's grace and word.

Nor was the principle behind this movement, as is often thought, simply the emphasis of God's word in the outward authority of Scripture. This is merely the "formal" side of the Protestant principle. A prior "material principle" or "life principle" kept the formal principle in balance. This principle was "the doctrine of the justification of the sinner before God by merit of Christ alone through faith."[284]

Schaff saw the material principle as the corrective reworking of the Christian principle which he maintained was, "Christian salvation rests upon the primary truth, that Jesus Christ, the absolute Godman is the only Redeemer and Mediator between man and a sinner and his offended maker." The

[282] Schaff, Principle, pp. 36-40.

[283] Schaff, Principle, pp. 40-47.

[284] Schaff, Principle, p. 53.

corrective was necessary due to the theological explanation of this principle by Rome. For Rome, wrote Schaff, the grace of Christ's atonement is appropriated only as the ground upon which an individual may appropriate the means of justification. By obtaining from the Church the "supernatural endowments" necessary to attain to the state of perfection, one could work out his own salvation. The effect had two ramifications. The legalistic structure of the Roman church dispensed the grace of Christ's atoning work in a mechanical manner. Second, the recipient of that grace has access to it only through assent to the doctrine which sustains it. Thus the individual is not primarily concerned with the first principle of Christianity at all, which is Christ as redeemer and the life in Christ which makes redemption possible, but to adherence to an outward rule.[285]

Mercersburg held that the proper recovery of the first principle of Christianity which is Christ, or the incarnation, occurred with the Reformation's development of the Protestant principle which balanced Rome's formal principle of outward authority with a new inward principle of freedom in the act of personal faith. Schaff continues:

> To the material or life-principle of the Reformation is joined as its necessary complement the formal or knowledge-principle; which consists in this, that the word of God, as it has been handed down to us in the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments, is the pure and proper source as well as the only certain measure, of all saving faith.[286]

The material and formal principles are related in that the way in which they are interpreted and stressed will be the way in which faith will evolve. Since the Roman system laid such weight on natural reason and good

[285] Schaff, Principle, pp. 55-57.

[286] Schaff, Principle, p. 70.

works, naturally the new formal principle, which made Scripture the ultimate source of revelation, threatened Rome's formal principle of "tradition." Thus the Reformation should not be understood to have insisted on Scripture for the sake of Scripture, but as the obvious reaction to Rome's formal principle of tradition, which had become out of harmony with its material principle. The Reformation placed the word before tradition in the "natural" antagonism of God's grace and word over against man's works and man's word.

Tradition is not rejected, but identified in its various forms as subservient to the formal principle of Scripture. Protestantism divides tradition into its parts, "ritual, historical and dogmatic." Schaff writes:

> To all of these forms the general relation of Protestantism is such, that it affirms their historical necessity, whilst at the same time it places them neither parallel with the scriptures, nor over them, but under them only, and measures their value by the extent of their agreement with this standard.[287]

The contemporary effect of this Reformation principle is the balance struck between the "insuperable difficulties" encountered by Protestants who do not recognize tradition at all and thus inherit an unhistorical "lifeless void" in place of a true Church, and between the obvious conflicts evident in the Roman system which, by allowing Church theologians to make final interpretations of Scripture, inherit a maze of different opinions, all of which are supposed to be orthodox, but clearly are not.[288]

Schaff and the Mediating writers of Germany led Nevin to adopt this

[287] Schaff, Principle, p. 82.

[288] Schaff, Principle, pp. 82-90.

same view. Church history is developmental. It grows as grows the spiritual life of individual consciousness. Rome's system was based on law. The doctrinal period of law under the Roman system received new inspiration in the German Reformation, where law was, once again as in the days of St. Paul, contrasted with the Gospel of freedom. In its theology of redemption, the Reformation recovered for the Church "the justification of the sinner before God, and the principle of freedom for the consciousness of the justified subject himself in all his relations."[289]

The notion that the concept of freedom was contained within the Reformation was especially important to Nevin. For him the history of the world in philosophy and events is the story of the balance of these principles. Christian culture is forever in the process of seeking the balance of the objective and subjective principles. In early Christian tradition, argues Nevin, the foundation of authority and discipline was established in the person of Christ. But by the Middle Ages the discipline had become "tyrannical and oppressive," and the Church, instead of seeking to encourage individual freedom and development, sought to subjugate the world in "perpetual vassalage" to its power. The relation of authority and obedience became "mechanical and altogether external." He concludes:

> In one word, the claims of the subjective were overwhelmed, and well nigh crushed by the towering pretensions of the objective.[290]

And the natural effect was the Reformation.

> A new stadium is in progress, for the universal life of the world; having for its object now the full assertion of what may be styled the subjective pole of freedom, in opposition to the long historical

[289] Nevin, Mystical, essay, p. 17.

[290] Nevin, "Freedom," p. 19.

> progress that went before, in favor of its opposite side. Protestantism is the fountain thus of all modern liberty, religious and political alike.[291]

Schaff's conclusion in The Principle of Protestantism is that it was only recently, in German theology, that the full understanding of the Protestant principle has come to light. Nevin, in turn, shared this view, holding that the full knowledge of the implications of the Reformation have just recently been recognized most vividly in the debates among the German idealistic and Mediating theologians.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF PROTESTANTISM

With Dorner, Ullmann and others Nevin concluded that the dissolution of Protestantism began with an overemphasis of its formal principle. Yet this was a natural effect which would eventually lead to the restoration of the balance of formal and material principles in the "age to come." The overemphasis of the formal principle was, in effect, a seventeenth-century reaction to the Protestant principle. Rome, for example, reacted by maintaining that the Protestant principle amounted to nothing more than "private judgment." The effect was a Protestant circling of the wagons, so to speak, around the formal principle of scriptural authority. This reaction was equalled by the Protestant reaction against the growing number of sects, most of which put too much stress on the material principle. Again, the reaction was to insist on the formal principle of Biblical authority. The resulting imbalance issued in a "war" between Protestant factions.[292]

Both Schaff and Nevin agreed that the recovery of the Protestant

[291] Nevin, "Freedom," p. 19

[292] John W. Nevin, "Dorner's History of Protestant Theology; Second Article, Mercersburg Review, 15 (1868), pp. 334-5.

material principle was the brilliant achievement of the eighteenth and nineteenth-century German philosophers and theologians as it was, in effect, the recovery of the Christian principle of the importance of Christ for the Church. Equally, both saw this recovery as a natural development from the antithesis of pietism and rationalism as it was filtered through the idealism of Kant, Hegel, Schleiermacher, and the Mediating school, over against the various traditionalist movements. Ultimately the antitheses synthesized in the "modern" Church movement in Germany.

Thus it was the unique discovery of the eighteenth and nineteenth century to understand the Protestant principle for what it was; ". . . absolutely perfect religion, because it unites the divine and human fully in one life." And while this idea has appeared before in human history, it "appears now most completely revealed in the philosophical and theological speculation of modern time." As the forces of this view work toward a united concept, what emerges is a concept of Christianity as the "actual" union of God with man. Nevin quotes Ullmann:

> Christianity can be properly regarded as the union of God and humanity, only where due account is made at the same time of its doctrinal, ethical, and soteriological character, and all is made to rest on its original, inalienable, according to which it is no matter of thought or logic merely in any form, but action, history, and life.[293]

The world's history is the history of its reunion with God in Christ. Yet for that to occur it must be more than an intellectual or doctrinal exercise. The material principle provides the means to achieve the first principle of Christianity, the "real" appropriation of Christ into the life of the believer.

[293] Nevin, Mystical, essay, p. 19.

Years after Nevin and Schaff went their separate ways, E.V. Gerhart sought to reconsider Mercersburg's system in light of his own reflections on Reformed theology. Yet his system was very much the system of Mercersburg. He attempted to follow all the historical reactions and antitheses mentioned by Mercersburg. His project had only limited success. It is virtually impossible to account logically for every historical reaction mentioned by Mercersburg, and equally difficult to decide whether both men shared each other's analysis of the particular splits and reactions from the Reformation to the present.[294] Nichols recognized this problem in Schaff's The Principle of Protestantism. His concern was also for the logical sequence which the historical dialectic should maintain but does not. Yet this is due not to a failure in the logic of the dialectic, but to Schaff's (and for that matter Nevin's) not following every moment of the dialectic's movement. Rather they addressed the movements and events which they felt a need to mention. And then they often worked backward or forward from there, again seemingly avoiding many of the "facts" and events.[295]

As did Hegel, Schaff and Nevin seemed undisturbed about making "leaps" through history, often times over events that may have vitiated their historical theory. Furthermore they seemed also to assume that their

[294] Emanuel V. Gerhart, Institutes of the Christian Religion, 2 vols., New York: A.C. Armstrong & Son, 1981.

[295] Nichols, Romanticism, p. 135. Nichols feels that confusion exists over how the various principles in The Principle of Protestantism connect, and whether Schaff is clear as to what precisely is the Protestant principle. Clearly Nichols' criticism of confusion is appropriate. Schaff seemed to assume his readers had a clear idea of the Christian principle and the principle of Protestantism. Yet Johnson has written, acknowledging Nichols' difficulty, but adding that Schaff himself saw no such confusion. In Johnson, "Seed," p. 135.

readers would assume confidence in their method. And the treatment of historical events were seldom treated as questions, but as pieces in the historical system which they were describing. Equally, the distinctions they made with other historical idealists were not made over the interpretation of events, but over the proper way to describe the system.

The most striking of breaks with the German idealists and, interestingly, with the common sense realists in America, was over this question of historical progress. While the historical events needed to be described accurately, the more important issue was the way they were being described. Idealists and realists, prior to the Mediating thought, were criticised for understanding Christian history as a succession of ideas or doctrines. Mercersburg insisted that Christian history is the development of Christian "life." The study of Church history is the study of Christ in his Church. As such Christianity must seek to master the spirit of history, which is the "inward life of the world." In this Mercersburg came into direct conflict with common sense realism's historical philosophy. It was Nevin's clear objective to enter the inward principle into the consciousness of American religion. Philosophy and theology were his vehicles. But that entailed modifying or replacing the current philosophic and theological convictions. Yet Nevin's approach here is not systematic. He does not identify the dominant American position and then step by step address it. Rather, he seems to think that Americans deplore philosophy itself. Thus his hope is to enlighten them to its necessity and to instill in them an interest in philosophy over against their mere appeal to "common sense," a substitute, he feels, for real critical thought.[296]

[296] Nevin, "Freedom," p. 40.

Schaff, on the other hand, would discover America's resistance to idealistic historical philosophy soon after he arrived. Yet his attempt to make America aware of the Spirit's development in history met with full and immediate approval by his colleague John Nevin. Upon meeting Nevin Schaff must have believed that American theologians were anxious for the revelations of German Idealism. He would learn soon enough how antagonistic American religious leaders would be to some of Germany's more recent philosophical and theological developments. Yet together, Schaff and Nevin shared a common point of view which joined them most dramatically at the issue of the Church. And as univocal as they were about the Church's past, they were equally-single minded about the Church's future. That future was an ever-ascending evolution into the city of God. While they could not supply the specifics of that evolution, they believed it was inevitable, and likely to culminate in the United States. Their philosophic source for this vision was Friedrich Schelling.

Even before Schaff had arrived in America he firmly believed that church union was not only necessary, but inevitable. During his personal encounter and evaluation of the Oxford movement in England he was led to write that there were essentially four options open to the Protestant churches. The first was a return to the Reformation, The second, a move toward Eastern Orthodoxy (which he had no use for). The third, return to Rome, as overtured by the Puseyites. And the fourth, and for Schaff the only credible alternative, a major purging of both parties (Rome and Protestants) followed by a totally new age of Protestantism (". . . eine hörere Bereiningung der beiden Parteien und ein neues Zeitalter des Protestantismus überhaupt zu erwarten steht").[297]

[297] Schaff, "Zwölf Tage," pp. 221-225. Schaff wrote, "As for the

Later, during Nevin's struggle with whether to join the Roman Catholic Church (around 1853), he too recorded a similar list of Protestant options (omitting the reference to Eastern Orthodoxy). In his third article on early Christianity Nevin is more convinced than ever that Protestantism is not the direct antecedent to "post-apostolic Christianity" and that Protestantism developed directly from Roman Catholicism. From his work with Cyprian and the creeds of Christendom Nevin became committed to the idea that the Roman church as well as its offspring Protestantism, had developed from the supernatural and divine institution which had been promised the continuing presence of Christ in its midst. In any denomination's rebellion against that one Church of Christ, there is a forfeiture of the divine presence and gifts. Only as each faction seeks to renew the prior unity in a "true" reconciliation, will the Church grow in its unity. Each must be willing to change and grow by negating their differences and by embracing each other's virtues. And like Schaff, while Nevin is committed to reconciliation with Rome, he is convinced that Pusey and Newman do not offer a reasonable solution. Instead the direction must be forward to a new synthesis. And that means that Protestantism must not

> remain hopelessly bound to the limits of the Roman system, as in the hands of Dr. Newman, nor yet on the other side run itself out into a fair dissolution of the very idea with which it started, whether this be by the Hegelian dialectics of a man like Baur or by such more respectable theories as we have from the hands of Rothe and Thiersch.[298]

Puseyites, the Pope said, 'The Puseyites are papists without a Pope, Catholics without unity, and Protestants without freedom' (I Puseyiti sono papisti senza papa, catholici senza unita, protestanti senza liberta)."

[298] Nevin, "Early Christianity: Third," p. 44. On the later point Nevin again refers to what he considers Hegel's violation of the organic principle where the original is lost in the process of development.

That is, says Nevin, Rome must give up its preoccupation with authority or law, which makes it overly objective, and Protestantism must give up its sectarianism, which is a perversion of its principle of freedom, making it overly subjective.

Nevin argues that three theories dominate the religious establishment. Only one can possibly be right and the eventual course of history's stream. The first holds that Protestantism is the reigning system of the Church into which Catholicism must be subsumed. The second maintains that Protestantism is a dialectical antithesis to Catholicism and that the result of their confrontation will be a synthesis on a higher level. The third argues that Catholicism is the only and true stream of the Church and that Protestantism must return to its source.[299]

Nevin does not commit himself to any theory at this point, but certainly his choice is the second, yet perhaps without Schaff's conviction.

So from their first encounter until they parted company, Schaff and Nevin believed in a future age of the Church which would be a dialectical synthesis of Roman Catholic and Protestant principles. Furthermore each continued to maintain that theoretically speaking the Reformation was not over. Protestantism had not completed its reforming work. Nevin wrote:

> The spirit of sect, as it cleaves to Protestantism at the present time is a very great evil, which is of itself sufficient to show that if Protestantism had any historical justification in the beginning, its mission thus far has been only half fulfilled, and that it can be rationally approved only as it is taken to be an intermitic preparation for some higher and better form of Christianity hereafter.[300]

[299] Nevin, "Early Christianity: Third," p. 49.

[300] Nevin, "Letter," p. 3.

Woolverton has described Nevin's conclusions in similar terms. He recorded Nevin's presentation of the alternatives of which Oxford, the Episcopacy, Rome, as well as "the victory of anti-sacramental forces represented by American revivalistic Protestantism," were not preferred. The choice was, for Nevin, the only real alternative, "a more rigorous theological culture . . . . a more cogent intellectual concept of the idea of historical development and thus 'true historical progress' issuing from it."[301]

SCHAFF AND SCHELLING

It was Klaus Penzel who, perhaps benefitting from Nichols' earlier suggestion, traced the development of Mercersburg's "romantically" conceived idea of the future development of the Church. In Penzel's article, "The Reformation Goes West: The Notion of Historical Development in the Thought of Philip Schaff," it is his thesis that Schaff's German Idealism culminates in an ecumenical vision of dialectical synthesis which is a catholic unity, stimulated by German thought, but carved out in American history. The dialectical progression of Schaff's "universal church," as it seeks expression in the reunion of Christendom, is composed of four strands of Schaff's thought. They are,

> The idealistic philosophy of history, the romantic understanding of the nature of the church, the ideal of 'Evangelical Catholicism,' and the Neander-Schmid school's interpretation of the doctrinal types of the apostolic church.[302]

In Germany Schaff found a general philosophic theory which brought confidence to his vision of the Church unified under Catholic and

[301] Woolverton, "Ecclesiology," p. 370.

[302] Penzel, "Reformation," pp. 219-241. Nichols' earlier mention of Schelling's influence appeared in Romanticism, p. 136.

Protestant principles. According to Penzel Schaff's "romantic" vision of the requisite unity of the Church (as Christ's body) encountered a certain amount of anxiety when wrestling with the growing spirit of denominationalism and sectarianism in the nineteenth century. The bold contrast between the ideal and the real led Schaff to Schelling and eventually to "Evangelical Catholicism."[303]

The dialectical model which Schelling provided Schaff identified Rome in the character of St. Peter, which was objective and legalistic. The antithesis which developed in the character of St. Paul was subjective and free. The anticipated synthesis is the character of St. John, which is a church principled in divine love.[304]

Penzel continues to say that Schaff's similarity to the later Schelling is most evident in their understanding of the relationship of the ideal to the real. That which is the idea of the Church is the apostolic Church. This idea exists in all of the particular manifestations of the Church. It is the idea which constitutes "the Church." Any practical deviation from that idea, moves the Church away from its proper idea. Only the perfect dialectic of Peterine and Pauline doctrine fused in a Johannean synthesis constitutes the apostolic Church. Penzel concludes that Schaff saw in the spirit of St. John the necessary "unity in diversity" which would issue in the "final synthesis" of Christendom.[305]

[303] Penzel, "Reformation," p. 226. Also, p. 95 of this thesis.

[304] Penzel, Reformation," p. 227.

[305] Penzel, "Reformation," p. 227. Penzel adds his criticism of Schaff and Schelling's romantic idealism on p. 228. A much earlier article by James Smylie, "Philip Schaff: Ecumenist," Encounter, 28 (1967), pp. 3-16, mentions that Schaff attended Schelling's Berlin lectures. Also, p. 96 of this thesis.

Schelling came to Berlin in a government effort to reduce the influence of Hegel. His major contention against Hegel was that Hegel's move from his logic of pure thought to his philosophy of nature could not be justified. Schelling maintained that Hegel had not shown how his own concept of the Spirit's development in history, as apprehended by reason, was the actual way in which history developed. That is, pure thought cannot move to objective nature, it can only reflect on what nature might be like. At the same time, Schelling was not content merely to reflect critically on history's development. He wanted to articulate a positive philosophy which could accurately comprehend and describe history's actual course. His conclusion was that human experience contains the facts of history's development such that real knowledge of history's course is embedded in the consciousness of human beings. Furthermore, the conditions of history's direction are equally contained in the consciousness of human beings. Therefore, it is possible to anticipate the form of history's development by understanding the individuals and their art, science and culture since these contain the conditions of history's past, present and future.

Hegel would not permit the substance of history to exist prior to its actual appearance. Thus he would not predict history's course. He believed philosophy had to rest content with the absolute knowledge of the nature and method of history's development. The details themselves are as a "night in which all cows are black." Schaff, as he got it from Schelling (and here he seems to go beyond the limits he sets for himself in his "Divina Commedia"), felt that given the careful analysis of the Church's past and present, the form of its future could be identified.

Beyond the historical theory itself, Schelling reflected many of the traditional Roman Catholic beliefs which were popular among the members of

the Prussian high-church movement. Understandably then, Schelling was quite popular among Roman Catholic scholars like J.S. Drey, whose student, J.A. Möhler, became an influence on Mercersburg. However, this influence should not be overstated. Where Drey and Möhler may have been most influential to Schaff was the way in which they distanced themselves from Schelling. While Schelling was able to offer the Roman Catholic theologians, as well as Schaff, a "scientific" organic concept of the development of revelation in individual human consciousness and experience as an experience of the divine, Schelling was soft on providence. Drey was able to fuse Schelling's idea of divine revelation to an idea of the direct intervention of God into human history.[306]

Equally, for Schaff, Schelling's distance from orthodox christology and his mystical mixing of the divine in history in general, were unsatisfactory. And while Möhler was clearly seen as more orthodox than Schelling and a brilliant historian, Schaff concluded that his work was much like that of the Protestant Mediating theologians with which he was abundantly familiar. Indeed, says Schaff, Möhler is actually a defender of "popery" whose formidableness derives from "protestant science."[307]

Penzel recognizes that Schelling's influence on Schaff was to provide him with a scientific case for the limits of human reason. Unlike Hegel, reason could not of itself be reconciled with the divine, but only through the outward influence of the divine breaking into history. Penzel

[306] Thomas F. O'Meara, Romantic Idealism and Roman Catholicism: Schelling and the Theologians, (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1982).

[307] Schaff, Principle, p. 97. The strongest case made to date for the serious influence of Möhler on Mercersburg is by the Roman Catholic scholar Nathan Mitchell in "Church, Eucharist, and Liturgical Reform at Mercersburg." Diss. Notre Dame, 1978.

concludes:

> . . . the goal of historical development is theosophy, the merging of reason with Christian faith. Schaff pieced these ideas together to form a comfortable pillow, on which his philosophical reflections could slumber for the rest of his days without ever stirring again.[308]

In an earlier article, Penzel reproduced the two critical Berlin lectures. The thirty-seventh lecture introduces the critical theme.

> Protestantism must recognize that it is merely a transition, an interim stage, that it has meaning only with reference to the still loftier stage it is to bring about.[309]

Nevin shared with Schaff Schelling's vision of a unified Church. He shared with him his theosophy and the desire for a theological awakening in the American Protestant church. His practical sacramental theology revolved around the idea of "the life of God in the soul of man" and like Schelling and Schaff he looked to the Gospel of St. John for his biblical support.[310] Yet Nevin seemed more aware than the others that the Church's progress is not always upward. He believed that the Church's development could be forestalled by "bad theology."[311] He was less convinced of the Church's "inevitable progress."[312] And even Schaff, who remained more steadfast than Nevin that the day of union was near at hand, later admitted

[308] Penzel, "Quest," p. 100.

[309] Penzel, "Nineteenth," p. 375.

[310] Plummer, "Theology," p. 63.

[311] Erb, Nevin's Classroom Lectures, p. 9.

[312] Ryan, "Nevin," p. 143.

that this final stage may not occur until the second advent.[313]

Nevertheless, while they were hesitant about the Church's precise future, they were resolved as to the American Protestant church's present condition. Just as in their assessment of Europe, Schaff and Nevin concluded that the Protestant principle of liberty had been carried to excess in America. In fact Nevin was convinced that the principle had been implanted in the very constitution of the country such that the assertion of individual prerogatives outweighed by far submission to a higher and absolute authority.[314] Nevertheless, it was in America that the next stage of Christendom would develop. While America clearly suffered from excessive liberty, Germany had no hope of developing the independent church/state system of America which could liberate Germany from the servitude of the Church to the state. While Germany and her best thinkers were stimulated to articulate a wonderous theology able to conceive the christological principle, they were unable to move to the next question; the question of the actual Church. They were prevented this movement by their situation. Said Nevin, the German church has been enveloped by the state, confirming Hegel's intuition and giving horrific credibility to the predictions of Rothe.[315]

Yet before America can move ahead toward its destiny which the freedom of a strict separation of Church and state provides, it must combat the growing threat of sectarianism and thereby deal directly with the contemporary practical question of the Church's unity. Schaff called

[313] Philip Schaff, "Progress of Christianity in the United States," Princeton Review, 55, July-Dec., (1879), p. 235.

[314] Nevin, "Freedom," p. 20.

[315] Nevin, "Relations," p. 632.

sectarianism "onesided practical subjectivism."[316] In America, he says, the sect system derived from the "Puritan" revolution. At first it was a natural reaction to "mere external formalism." But in its return to personal piety it forgot the importance of objective knowledge. In reaction to the "spiritless body" of Anglicanism, Puritanism became a "bodiless spirit." Both states are doomed to lifelessness. Schaff calls for the recovery of the inspirited body.[317]

Schaff finds the sectarian spirit to be essentially a reaction to all outward objectivity and he establishes American sectarianism among the New England Congregationalists, the Methodists in general, and the Scottish secessionists. Indeed, says Schaff, "Puritan protestantism forms properly the main basis of our North American Church." To the above list he would add, with some reservation, the Presbyterian Church of Scottish and Irish derivation. Yet he reminds, this last denomination is a modification of the same "form," whose influence theologically reigns in the theology of "the Westminster confession."[318]

Against this vice-grip of sectarian practice, Schaff would advise the Church of the crucial importance of unity as sustained in "an organic union." Congregationalism, says Schaff, is by nature atomistic. And the deceptive "Bible principle" brandished by Puritans does more to separate denominations than to unify them around the one Word of God.[319]

Schaff understands the sectarian development to have been naturally

[316] Schaff, Principle, pp. 113-114.

[317] Schaff, Principle, p. 107.

[318] Schaff, Principle, pp. 111-112.

[319] Schaff, Principle. p. 115.

fueled by the separation of the religious institutions from the American state. The separation of Church and state opened a veritable flood gate of religious heresy. And, says Schaff, America's situation in all its variety helped those heresies flourish. Schaff wrote:

> Such is the aspect of our land. A variegated sampler of all conceivable religious chimeras and dreams, in connection with more sober systems of sectarian faith! Every theological vagabond and pedler may drive here his bungling trade, without passport of license, and sell his false ware at pleasure.[320]

For Schaff the "plague" of sect was by far more dangerous to the "Faith" than Roman Catholicism. Likewise, it would do Protestant's little good correcting this evil by referring to the currently abused "formal principle." Rather, the foe must be confronted with the scholarship of history and a strong doctrine of the Church. Schaff concludes that what is needed is not

> our formal principle; for they all appeal themselves to the bible, though without right; but the power of history, and the idea of the Church, as the pillar and ground of the truth, the mother of all believers, with due subordination always to the written word. In this controversy we may be said rather to have the Roman Church, in a certain sense, on our side.[321]

Schaff's rebuke of the sad state of the American Protestant church did not lead him to pessimism with regard to the future state of American orthodoxy. Indeed, in Schaff's organic theory of historical development, America's sectarian development would naturally issue in a higher order as the system of sectarianism (as did rationalism in Germany) carries within

[320] Schaff, Principle, p. 116.

[321] Schaff, Principle, p. 120. Later Schaff would modify his position on voluntaryism and become a strong supporter of the American denominational system.

it the "living germ" of its higher synthesis. Just as Medieval catholicism represented "stiff objectivity," Protestantism's two hand maids carry with them the needed balance of "loose subjectivity." The germ within each is still part of the divine plan of God.

Thus for Mercersburg America would play the central role in the future of Christian historical development. It became a major practical concern of both Schaff and Nevin to educate America to its future. In one early address to the Schiller Society, 1846, Schaff seeks to promote German learning and culture by asking for an equal sharing of German thought with the prevailing stream of English thought. He felt the balance would be essential to the harmonious working out of the historical dialectic in America. In the transplanting of two European cultures on American soil, Mercersburg anticipated the possibility of a religious synergism (der Wiederhall der alten Welt und der Ausdruck fremder Lebendigkeit) which could bring Christianity into the age of St. John, the age of Christian unity. And it its virtually within the "clash" of German and English churches in America that Mercersburg believed there would be a merging into one spiritual nation.[322]

CHRISTOLOGY

Having considered the theory and method of Mercersburg's system, we now turn to the system's theological doctrines beginning with the central doctrine of the incarnation.

[322] Philipp Schaf, "Anglogermanismus," in Addresses and Essays of Schaff, Nevin, and etc., (Mercersburg, Nov. 1853). Schaff's personal edition, Princeton Theological Seminary Library, n.p., n.d. Schaff quotes Hegel here to illustrate America's potential for new creativity. ". . . the resonance of the old world and the expressiveness of foreign vivacity." And Philipp Schaff, "Der Puritanismus und der Kirchenfreund," Der Deutsche Kirchenfreund, 2 (1849), p. 117.

The divine source of Christianity's reunion is Christ himself. Philosophy, theology and history all derive from what Mercersburg called the first principle of incarnation. All of human culture will someday culminate in Christ's second advent. Furthermore, the Church, as it has developed through history, proceeds from the person of Christ and thus from the fact of the incarnation. Thus it is quite correct to see Mercersburg's theological system as being thoroughly christocentric.

When Nevin described the new liturgy produced by the Mercersburg theology (1867) he began his discussion confessing to a "Christocentric theology," which, having emerged from German scholarship, constitutes a "Copernican revolution" by placing the true object of theological study at the "centre of observation." That center is the person of Christ. This dogma, says Nevin, "needs no proof. It is a first principle, a self-evident axiom, in Christianity."[323] Nevin writes:

> A theology which is truly Christocentric, must follow the creed, must be objective, must be historical; with this, must be churchly; and with this again, must be sacramental and liturgical.[324]

All is said to proceed from the idea of God becoming human in Christ. The idea of Christ constitutes the organizing principle of the system's inward structure. Again, as a "life principle" its effect is not instrumental, but ontological. Christ saves the world not by what he does so much as what he is. The influence of Christ as the work of salvation

[323] John W. Nevin, "The Theology of the New Liturgy," Mercersburg Review, 14 (1867), p. 29

[324] Nevin, "New Liturgy," p. 44.

does not represent a new order of doctrine, but a new order of existence, a supernatural order which has permeated the natural.[325]

The same idea is expressed throughout Schaff's historical work. Yet both men stress that the Christ principle must include God's becoming human that humanity may share in God. The incarnation contains the concept that Christ accomplished the "reunion" of God with humanity, which is precisely the function of all religion. As such the emphasis is laid on the person of Christ.[326] Both Schaff and Nevin stress that the believer's participation in God occurs in his union with the humanity of Christ.

The fact of Mercersburg's theology being a christocentric theology has been widely attested to. Indeed, V.L. Barker has written that Nevin's place in American intellectual thought was secured by

> his focus on the doctrine of the incarnation as the basis of his doctrine of the church just when the incarnational mode, the unitive theme, was central to the concern and efforts of the great nineteenth century American writers.[327]

More recently Brooks Holifield has echoed the centrality of Christ in Mercersburg theology.

> Nevin simply wanted to say that union with Christ was the central moment in the order of salvation. He wanted to affirm a relation of participation between the created, fallen self and the incarnate savior, whose life had passed over to his people as the Church.[328]

[325] Nevin, "Letter," p. 2.

[326] Schaff, Person, and Nevin, Mystical Presence.

[327] V.L. Barker, "John W. Nevin: His Place in American Intellectual Thought." Diss. St. Louis University 1970.

[328] Brooks E. Holifield, "Mercersburg, Princeton, and the South: The Sacramental Controversy in the Nineteenth Century," Journal of Presbyterian History, 54 (1976), p. 247.

Yet before most others, E.V. Gerhart, the Mercersburg "apologist," described the Mercersburg system as proceeding from the incarnation or "Christ-idea." Like Mercersburg, Gerhart's approach was mediatorial. He sought to unite the objective and subjective poles of the Protestant principle in the mediatorial life of Christ. He writes:

> The spontaneous endeavor of thought to ascertain the relations of doctrines and reduce them to unity in a self-consistent system issues in the science of theology; and that it may answer the demands of sound reason theological science requires that it be determined from within and animated at all points by a central truth.[329]

That central truth is again the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ.

Gerhart's preface gives way to an introduction written by Schaff. Here again the theme is christocentrism. Schaff writes that the "aim" of religion is the "reunion of man with God . . . . " This dogma is consistent with the "Trinitarian Faith" which proceeds from the Apostles' Creed. It has always been part of the orthodox faith. Yet, says Schaff, today it is more necessary than ever to assert its position. Schaff contends that the christocentric, churchly theology must now be received in America as it has in Germany in order to curtail the influence of the "Puritan" system. He concludes that such a system which is based on a purely metaphysical doctrine of "premundane decrees, or on the absolute sovereignty of God, is out of date." Granted such a theology served the purposes of previous centuries, but not the nineteenth. "Every age must produce its own theology." Says Schaff, the idea of immutable decrees, before the world's foundation, pales before the evidence of historical progress. We know

[329] Gerhart, Institutes, p. vii. See also, Charles Yrigoyen Jr., "Emmanuel V. Gerhart: Apologist for the Mercersburg Theology," Journal of Presbyterian History, 57 (1979), 485-500.

nothing of eternal decrees, "But we do know the historical manifestation of God in Christ."[330]

It is interesting to note that this introduction comes at a late date for Schaff. His christocentrism was something from which he never departed. It began in Germany. And though he himself contends that the idea of religion's being the relation of man with God comes from Lactantius, it is clear that Schaff's exposure to the concept of Christ as the reunion of God and man came from Schleiermacher, Hegel and the Mediating school.[331] As Plummer points out, Nevin's Christology also derived from the same influences.[332] And both saw the christological principle as completely united with their historical concept. In the idea of organic development the incarnation in Jesus of Nazareth is the proleptic phenomenon which effectively concludes history itself. While history moves forward, all progress after Christ is merely a fuller "appropriation" of his "divine human life . . . ."[333]

Philosophically and theologically the christological principle was first presented to the GRC in Mercersburg by Rauch. Like Schaff and Nevin, Rauch had it from German Idealism. Says Ziegler, Rauch, with Hegel, believed Christ was God's act of self revelation. In Rauch's stress on the

[330] Philip Schaff, Introd., Institutes of the Christian Religion, by E.V. Gerhart, 2 vols., (New York: A.C. Armstrong & Son, 1891). Schaff seems to have written this introduction without having read Gerhart's two volumes. The introduction is dated a year before the publication of the Institutes and there is no mention of the work's contents.

[331] Schaff, Propaedeutic, p. 18.

[332] Plummer, "Theology," pp. 380-400.

[333] Schriver, "Schaff's Concept," pp. 71-144.

incarnation, he established the affinity of God and man in a theological culture which had placed more stress on Christ's death than on His life. But Rauch's purpose was not so much to pick theological hairs as to bring theology into line with modern science. The attempt to reconcile faith and reason led him to criticize a theology which sanctioned the disruption of the laws of nature. Organically interpreted, natural law and the advent of Christ could be reconciled. Christ did not "break into history." Rather, he "grows out of history and becomes exemplar for mankind." The Christ of history attained perfect uniformity with the will of God such that he and his life were in complete conformity with God's infinite will. Christ's perfect unity with the divine will created the conjunction of heaven and earth, infinite and finite. Furthermore, the atonement was effected in the person of Christ as a phenomenon of natural history, history realizing itself as purposeful and directed by God himself. Christ suffers not to satisfy an overdue debt, but suffering is understood as humanity, as finitude, so that his suffering and exhaltation are perfect complements to his humanity and divinity.[334]

However, the obvious connection here with Schleiermacher must be limited by Rauch's outright criticism of Schleiermacher's concept of religion as beginning with a feeling of utter dependence. With Hegel, Rauch would not separate feeling and thinking. Still, Rauch argues that religion is the real bond between God and man which comes about in the "heart" of man.[335]

[334] Ziegler, Rauch, p. 81.

[335] Rauch, Psychology, pp. 384-389.

In Rauch's placing the union of God and man in the heart, he means to describe the peculiar capacity of man and activity of God which establishes the relationship of faith. Yet, Rauch's seemingly cold Hegelianism, which transforms the Christ of history into a system of philosophical concepts and categories, appears only in the Psychology. A warmer, evangelical spirit emerges in his devotional material. And while the dialectical language remains, Christ, as mediator and reconciler of heaven and earth, is argued with frequent quotations from Scripture and practical metaphors.[336]

While Rauch is a thoroughgoing advocate of the organic conception of history and theology, it is hard to imagine him insisting on Mercersburg's ultimately crucial distinction that Jesus of Nazareth, born of Mary, himself, as an ongoing living presence in history and the Church, constitutes the reconciliation of God and man. Rauch, I suspect, would have seen Christ as the mediator of the reconciliation, such that Christ constitutes our reunion with God by his actions which the Church or believer appropriates through the active mediation of spirit, awakening the mind, thus convicting the heart. Furthermore, Rauch would probably not have gone as far as Nevin and Schaff in terms of the importance of the Creed. Thinking about what Christ did would have to precede faith in what Christ's life means to the believer or world. For Rauch thinking or perhaps consciousness comes first. For Nevin and Schaff, confessing Christ constitutes the first step of faith, and thus becomes the proper ground upon which right thinking can occur.

Nevin wrote that Jesus' testimony was to himself.

[336] Rauch, Inner Life, pp. 19-20.

> . . . Jesus Christ is in very deed what He represents Himself to be in His Word, the fulness of the Godhead bodily . . . . [337]

Nevin would stress this "self-evident" dogma even beyond the Mediating theologian Isaac Dorner, with whom he was in conflict over this and related points. Dorner's christology develops from his theistic position. In contrast Nevin writes that theism does not necessarily or logically proceed to christocentrism, nor even to Christianity. It is just as likely that theism will lead to "pantheism, dualism, polytheism, deism, and all false religions . . . ."[338] The "distinct knowledge of Christianity" only develops as we begin confessionally, with Christ, through faith. The incarnation is the principle

> which however it may be comprehended in the general principle of all religion, must be regarded at the same time, nevertheless, as the ground and beginning, exclusively and entirely, of religion under this its highest and only absolutely complete form.[339]

Yet again, the life of Christ develops in the believer through the organ of faith "and not in the idea of God simply as the absolute ground and beginning of all things . . . . " The fact of the incarnation is comprehended "in the eternal generation of the Son, as that again holds only in the absolute Being of God." While the being of God as first cause of all things is the ground of creation, as we contemplate this reality from our experience in the new creation established by Christ, we find that the principle of the incarnation is the source of all that is included in

[337] John W. Nevin, "The Testimony of Jesus," Mercersburg Review, 24 (1877), p. 31.

[338] Nevin, "Answer," pp. 552-553.

[339] Nevin, "Answer," p. 553.

this new creation. All doctrine therefore, is controlled and proceeds by the "guidance and illumination" of this principle.

> Nay, as the ultimate sense of all going before, it is easy to see, that this last fact, the coming of Christ in the flesh, must indeed be regarded as the only sole orb of light, that can flood with any true intelligence either the older ways of God or the being and character of God in any other view.[340]

The anatomy of confession is the innate capacity of humans to be encountered by the divine Godman. In confession the organ of faith responds to the divine revelation. The capacity for faith answers in faith, where that which is utterly supernatural itself encounters "the organ for the supernatural in the human mind." Thus the first step is inward transformation sparked by outward experience. Nevin writes:

> The supernatural object, which in its ultimate fullness is the Word Incarnate, Christ Himself, must itself shine into the eye of our spiritual intelligence; else all will be dark.[341]

Again, the Creed becomes the source of faith in the inward expression of belief and the outward confessional utterance which is the contents of the Gospel of faith. In confessing the Creed the "mystical union," which is the union of Christ with his Church, is expressed. The union itself is "inward," deep and "real." It is established by the "Holy Ghost" and sustained through faith. The nature of the union is a union "with the entire humanity of Christ."

The issue of union with Christ's humanity was a crucial one for Mercersburg. It was a conscious departure from scholastic Calvinism and the

[340] Nevin, "Answer," pp. 552-554.

[341] Nevin, "Life," p. 115.

source of criticism both from within the GRC as well as from without. Furthermore, it was more a pet notion of Nevin than Schaff. It developed in reaction to the two problems of the scientific explanation of the incarnation and the organic explanation of how Christ is appropriated by the believer. We shall treat the first here and the second in subsequent sections.

The doctrine of incarnation was at a crisis in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The problem divided itself over two questions. First was the necessity of the incarnation. The second was the nature of Christ. The perceived problem was to resolve the first without forcing a purely mechanical union with the Godman and the second, without falling into pantheistic heresy.[342]

Nevin felt that neither the Lutherans nor the Reformed had been able to "represent the theanthropic person in true unity."[343] Liebner's solution, which attracted Nevin, was to apprehend the Godman ethically. The ethical approach of Liebner demanded an emphasis on Christ's life in bringing the believer to union with God over an emphasis on Christ's death as the necessary sacrifice for human sin. Humanity's creation requires the incarnation as well as its fall requires it. Humanity is by necessity destined to union with God as much as it was destined to be united in sin to Adam.[344]

Yet Nevin remains cautious. In spite of the attractiveness of Liebner's outcome, it remains a question, had Adam not sinned would there

[342] Nevin, "Liebner's Christology," pp. 62-63.

[343] Nevin, "Liebner's Christology," p. 65.

[344] Nevin, "Liebner's Christology," pp. 65-66. The crucial issue of Christ as second Adam is treated in the section on Calvin and Nevin.

have been an incarnation? For the sixteenth-century Reformers there was no issue. Sin made the incarnation necessary. Yet, from the Church's beginning the nagging concern remained. Could such an important event as the incarnation depend on the capriciousness of humanity?

Still, to overemphasize the incarnation as holding beyond and before human sin led again, in Nevin's mind, to pantheistic error. Says Nevin, pantheistic systems which take God's love as a process of "absolute self-consciousness" as it comes to be in the speculative thinking of the human geist really mean,

> man is formed by his nature to become divine or theanthropic, in which view the entire history of the race is to be regarded as a so called eternal incarnation of the Deity.[345]

Nevin pronounces his judgment. "All such logico-metaphysical blasphemy is here left entirely out of sight."

Nor will Nevin allow an Abelardian view which conceives the incarnation in the "love" of God for man. And he is equally hostile to his perception of the Hegelian position.

> So also is no regard had to those theories of an original necessity for the Incarnation, which shrink not from making it to be the completion of God himself, the higher unity, as they say, in which the contradiction of the pretended abstractions, Deity and Humanity, is brought to an end (aufgehoben).[346]

Again, Nevin's verdict is unmistakable. This position, he says, ostensibly makes the incarnation necessary. But not only is it necessary for humanity, it is necessary for God as well. This Nevin will not have. In

[345] John W. Nevin, "Cur Deus Homo?" Mercersburg Review, 3 (1851), p. 223. Named after Anselm's famous work.

[346] Nevin, "Cur," p. 223.

Hegel the incarnation becomes in fact "the absurdity of an absolute coming to pass."[347]

Because of contemporary demands for reasonable Christianity, in an age of scientific knowledge, Mercersburg felt that orthodoxy itself was at stake over the very question of who Christ was and how and why he came. The task was to avoid the pantheistic mire and still maintain the absolute necessity of the incarnation for human completeness. Yet every attempt to begin somewhere other than sin in interpreting the incarnation led to error. Thus Nevin concluded, without having solved the dilemma, yet maintaining his strict orthodox position:

> It is only the fact of sin in truth, apprehended in its world-vast solemnity and significance, that furnishes an adequate reason for the highest act of God's love. The sense of this fact therefore must lead the way in every effort that is made successfully, to understand or interpret the christological mystery.[348]

Yet while sin makes the incarnation necessary, the order of sin and incarnation is reversed in human experience. For the Church it was the Godman, Jesus Christ, who brought the knowledge of the proper response to human folly. Only as the believer appropriates Christ can the full implications of his sin be known to him. Likewise, only as Christ's redemptive grace permeats culture, is society able to even develop a right understanding of human sin. Thus for the Church, while the cosmological order of existence is God, creation, fall and incarnation, the actual order for human consciousness and experience is incarnation, creation and fall, where the ideas of incarnation, creation and fall all derive from the single, first revelation of the divine in the human person of Christ.

[347] Nevin, "Cur," p. 223.

[348] Nevin, "Cur," p. 238.

The immediacy of Christ for the believer is objectively contained in the Creed, which is confessed by the Church. Christ is said to be present, working in his Church. Again, this is not a "physical prolongation of his proper personal life." Rather, it is an inward presence which becomes objective only in the confession and response of the Church. The exact way in which Christ accomplishes this activity is, for Nevin, a mystery.[349]

Because of this Dorner's criticism of Mercersburg's held that Mercersburg leaves no room for personal faith, nor intellectual assent. Christ's objective presence is an a-priori fact. But Nevin responds to the contrary. Christianity is not at heart the act of the acceptance or rejection of doctrine or ideas. This became the very problem of the emphasis of the formal principle on the part of Protestantism and on the part of Rome. Christianity begins at heart with the recognition of the person of Jesus Christ as God come to mankind in human form. As such, Nevin believed that faith must be applied even more clearly in his approach than in Dorner's, since the person of Christ cannot be apprehended by mind but can only be confessed by creed.[350]

Nevin allows that the christological theology which Mercersburg got from Germany has benefitted from the ongoing christological debates. These included the resulting insight that Christianity is first of all a "life." He recognizes that the Mediating approach took Hegel and Schleiermacher's defective doctrines of the Trinity and sin and corrected them by wedding the incarnational concept to the "ancient faith of the church." And he admires the way in which the Mediators took their teachers' concept of

[349] Nevin, "Answer," p. 595.

[350] Nevin, "Answer," pp. 569-571.

organic development and union and wed them to the doctrine of Christ's "separate divinity and the reality of the incarnation." Says Nevin, without the equal coexistence of the first with the more dominant last, "God can come into no real union of this sort with the world . . . ."

> If Christ and Christianity come not into organic union with the previous constitution of the world, in such a way as to complete its whole sense, by linking the supernatural with its life in an abiding and real new creation, is not the mystery of the incarnation shorn of all its significance and credibility at the same time?[351]

Yet against the mediators of Dorner's persuasion Nevin argues that all of this ultimately hangs upon the Creed. Indeed, the supernatural linking with the natural as a union of Christ with the believer is spelled out in the Athanasian Creed.[352] Furthermore, it is the heart of what the early church believed and confessed. And finally Nevin concludes that the Mercersburg christological system is not only consistent with modern theological science, with the system of the ancient creeds, and with the belief of the ancient Church, but because of its agreement with the ancient creedal system of the Church, it is also consistent with Scripture. He writes of this:

> And, in thus agreeing with the Creed, the system of course holds itself to be to the same extent in full agreement with the proper sense of the Scriptures . . . . [353]

DOCTRINE OF THE ATONEMENT

Mercersburg's christocentrism issued in their progresssive doctrine of the atonement. The result was that they were seen to abandon the Reformed

[351] Nevin, "Antichrist," pp. 8-9.

[352] Nevin, "Antichrist," p. 6.

[353] Nevin, "Letter," pp. 3-4.

emphasis on the sacrifice of Christ. This alternative emphasis was a conscious effort to heal what Mercersburg perceived was a serious malaise in American orthodox theology. The malaise was aggravated by viewing Christianity as doctrine rather than as "life." Mercersburg was obliged to conclude that Christ's atoning death was the necessary corollary to his relationship to the believer, to his mediatorship. But, they emphasized, his death is not the beginning nor end of the Gospel.[354]

The new emphasis ultimately produced criticism from a former ally, Isaac Dorner, and from certain American theologians. Yet Mercersburg never meant to cast a shadow on the importance of the atonement, nor did they deviate much from the rudiments of the Anselmic view. But they did insist that without Christ's birth and life there would have been no atonement. And granting this rather weak argument of "chronological priority," it remains true enough, claimed Mercersburg, that the incarnation itself set the conditions upon which Christ's sacrifice would be acceptable. Only a perfect and sinless life would satisfy the sacrificial requirements. Furthermore, such a life must have been fully entered into the world's life, as a real existence, and not merely a moral platitude, for there to have been a true organic communion between Christ and the world.[355]

Mercersburg argued that the doctrine of the atonement, the doctrine of justification by faith, indeed, all doctrines are actually enlargements of

> the objective mystery of the new creation in Christ Jesus, as this has been first apprehended in the form of the Creed; and every doctrine is an outgrowth from this, having this its position, complexion and

[354] Nevin, "Answer," p. 607.

[355] Nevin, "Answer," pp. 600-607.

quality in the system, both for faith and for knowledge, as it could not possibly have them in any other way.[356]

As much as christocentrism was seen by Mercersburg to address the conditions set by scientific theology, it equally spoke a word of admonishment to the American theological community. The popular form of Calvin's system treated the atonement unhistorically, as an "outward device" for the explanation of the question of why the infinite God of creation lowered himself to banal finitude. Such a doctrine makes Christ simply a "mediator" of truth, and "not its very principle and substance."[357] Nevin concluded that this form of Calvinism, with its legalistic atonement theory, conceived of a state of nature as artificial and abstract as the natural states conceived by Hobbes and Rousseau. Just as with Hobbes and Rousseau, this type of Calvinism serves first the "practical needs" which are required by the social or intellectual circumstances. The "true order of doctrine" must not proceed from the temporary, peculiar and illusive conditions in which the theologian finds himself. Doctrine cannot be based on the historical index of biblical books and historical epochs nor the abstract concept of the universal decrees of God, any more than from the invention of primitive "natural states." Doctrine must develop through the mediation of the mystery of the person of Christ, as in "the Christological order and method of the Creed."[358]

As conscious as Mercersburg was of the danger of minimizing the fact of the encompassing influence of human sin, they saw the merit in arguing

[356] Nevin, "New Liturgy," p. 37.

[357] Nevin, "Life," pp. 54-58.

[358] Nevin, "Life," pp. 62-71.

that Christ would have come regardless of the fall. Nevin maintains, for example, that it is not only a narrowness of interpretation which sees Christ solely as one who came "that He might offer His life as a ransom for us on the cross . . . [but] an actual perversion of the Gospel."[359]

The true purpose of Christ's mission was to reveal God, "to bring men to the true sense and consciousness of what He is in His own nature . . . ." In that revelation is humanity's salvation. "This is the true idea of revelation, according to which it is essentially joined with the idea of redemption."[360]

Once again the point is driven home, Christ succeeds by who he is, not by what he does. Yet what he does is a direct result of who he is. Nevin concludes:

> [Christ] did not set Himself to the task of providing for the use of men a body of religious instruction, which might serve as a remedy for all sorts of error, and as a universal guide and directory for all right thinking, in a way answerable to the greatness of the moral revolution He proposed to accomplish . . . . [361]

Rather, it was

> His own living person and presence, and in the self-demonstrating power which this carried with it to show that He was the Son of God and that [sic] the very fulness of the Godhead itself in bodily form.[362]

[359] John W. Nevin, "The Revelation of God in Christ," Mercersburg Review, 18 (1871), pp. 325-326.

[360] Nevin, "Revelation," p. 331.

[361] Nevin, "Revelation," p. 332.

[362] Nevin, "Revelation," p. 334. Nevin's late reading of Emmanuel Swedenborg should be noted in light of a comment found in this text. Says Nevin, Swedenborg is guilty of treating Christ's revelation mechanically, seeing in it a mysterious reinterpretation of the Old Testament (p. 333).

Other writers on Mercersburg have also described the movement's departure from the popular form of the Reformed doctrine of atonement. Nathan Mitchell perceptively quoted Nevin in his belief that in the incarnation God irreversibly decides "to 'fall into the regular process of the world's history.'"[363] The resulting conflict with American Calvinism is in Mercersburg's identification of human nature as "fundamentally characterized by reaching after a true and real union with the nature of God, as the necessary complement and consummation of its own life."[364]

While Mitchell has thus recognized the Scotist position of Nevin, that "the incarnation would have occurred even had there been no 'Fall' and consequently no 'damage' to repair,' as a result of human sin"[365], much earlier, B.S. Schneck warned American Protestant orthodoxy of Mercersburg's unconventional ideas on the doctrine of the atonement.

In spite of Nevin's constant cry of being misunderstood by the American religious press, Schneck, as well as most of the Mercersburg critics, did correctly recognize Mercersburg's "central principle" of the incarnation and what it meant for the doctrine of the atonement. But after grasping this first, all important point, the rest of Schneck's criticism is somewhat of a distortion. He says that from Mercersburg's first principle it is clear that our salvation is not accomplished by moral means, "but by an organic union of the Incarnate Word with humanity, as a whole . . . ." Says Schneck, Mercersburg has understood the vital

[363] Mitchell, "Church," p. 482.

[364] Mitchell, "Church," p. 487. Calvin, in contrast, may be characterized as responding that, when in the garden Adam and Eve desired the apple, God said, "No!"

[365] Mitchell, "Church," p. 528.

relationship of Christ not according to the Heidelberg Catechism, which is normative for the GRC, and which holds that mankind is "saved through the sufferings and death of Christ." And he concludes on a note certain to alarm his Reformed readers. Humanity for Mercersburg, is saved "by the actual, literal, substantial conveyance to believers of the very substance of the life of Christ incarnate."[366]

John Nevin described the essence of his atonement theory in his early Mercersburg classroom lectures. His elaboration of this outline is found in his various reactions to the common form of Calvinism recorded in his writings. These elaborations will be described in the section on Nevin's departure from Calvin. However, in the Mercersburg lectures Nevin is also consciously departing from popular Calvinism, as well as from the classroom text by John Dick. His first concern is expectedly, to avoid a narrow or exclusive theory of the atonement. His language is decidedly idealistic. Christ's achievement is the perfection of humanity. Yet it is up to the individual to attain to this perfection through acceptance of the fact of Christ's divinity and through an ongoing relationship with Christ.

Nevin realizes that not everyone will accept Christ. While the idea of "the restoration of all men" is an attractive and popular idea, recently revived by Schleiermacher, it does not deal honestly with the facts. Yet, on the other hand, says Nevin, the abstract Calvinistic supralapsarianism is an extreme on the other side. Nevin cautions his students against either excess, and yet he offers no solution to the puzzle of reprobation.[367]

His approach is to provide what he considers a reasonable explanation

[366] B.S. Schneck, Mercersburg Theology Inconsistent With Protestant and Reformed Doctrine (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott & Co., 1874), p. 18.

[367] Erb, "Nevin's Classroom Lectures," pp. 156-163.

for the necessity of the incarnation. The fall itself presupposes history's development, which was made possible by the incarnation, since the fall implies redemption. In speaking of the period before the fall, asking did God "foreordain" or "foresee" temptation's outcome, he concludes, it would nullify human freedom to say God foreordained the fall as well as the redemption of the elect and damnation of the reprobate. So Nevin adopts the position that God foresaw humanity's future (scientia media). When speaking of the divine decrees, sin is included in the decree, along with redemption. Yet it is redemption which controls the plan of salvation. Christ must have come, since the decree included the fall.

In later years Nevin ceases even to consider the decrees and declares them to be misleading abstractions. However, in his recorded lectures at least, Nevin implies that foreknowing solves the dilemma of the decrees and the question of human freedom over against God's omnipotence and omnipresence. Yet in these lectures he does not address the question, whether God's foreknowing makes future contingencies, which constitute the evidence of human freedom, impossible. For Nevin, God foresees humanity's future. And foreknowing does not impose upon man's freedom.[368]

Similarly, Nevin continues to struggle with logical consistency in his straining to be orthodox on the question of the entrance of sin into the world. Sin is a necessary fact of this world. However, sin is not a necessary fact of existence. It does not spring from creation itself, but from deep within the individual soul, from humanity's capacity for free choice. In this Nevin seeks to establish an orthodox Augustinian view of the nature of sin and to distance himself from the Hegelians. While an

[368] Erb, "Nevin's Classroom Lectures," p. 197.

individual could choose and thus be "free" before the fall, this does not necessarily imply the prior existence of evil and therefore its necessity. Nevin criticises Hegel who argues that for there to be good, there must also be evil. Hegel's school requires a knowledge of both good and evil for either to exist. However, Nevin responds that the Bible does not show this. Rather, sin, as a free ethical act, was unnecessary.[369]

In Nevin's consistently mediatorial (if consequently somewhat less than thorough and opaque argument on the atonement question) he took the middle way in opposition to those of the rationalistic view, who consider the biblical account of the fall to be merely a late story and the literalists, who argue it is an historical account of actual events. His alternative is a retreat, or perhaps a leap, over to what Mercersburg would come to feel very deeply: that is, the ultimately supernatural character of the faith. Nevin says that the biblical account of the fall is neither figurative nor literal. It is the account given by Moses of his vision. It thus has a supernatural quality and should be understood as primarily meaningful in its inward, or symbolic force.[370]

During the 1850's Mercersburg's (especially the outspoken Nevin) interpretation of the doctrine of the atonement became highly controversial. And while Mercersburg would not compromise their position on the primary necessity of the incarnation, they did feel certain anxiety about the religious public's reaction to their alleged unorthodoxy. This reaction was spurred in part by the frequent misrepresentations of their views by the religious press. In 1861 Nevin wrote to clarify Mercersburg's

[369] Erb, "Nevin's Classroom Lectures," pp. 197-199.

[370] Erb, "Nevin's Classroom Lectures," p. 198.

position. Christ's passion and resurrection were necessary "to make satisfaction for the sins of men . . . ." Sin had to be paid for by the penalty of death. But Nevin is quick to add, not just any death.[371]

The crucial addition is the words "and resurrection." The atonement issues in a wholly supernatural act such that all of the events included in the passion are controlled by the resurrection, and the resurrection is controlled ultimately by the incarnation. Nevin writes that the conclusion must be that "without the resurrection the death could be of no account."[372]

In another attempt to demonstrate the orthodoxy of their position, Nevin appeals to Luther's faith principle, as a necessary condition of humanity's benefitting from Christ's act of atonement. While the act itself provides the objective condition of the atonement, the subjective condition provides that the saving act is truly constituted in the relationship achieved between the sinner and the entire life of Christ as the history of his person and not merely by the apprehension of the mere doctrine of the atonement. As with Luther, "faith . . . is an independent principle of evangelical truth, and not a secondary authority simply depending on the Bible."[373]

The relationship is "the direct apprehension of the truth itself," requiring no mediating concept, existing independent of the written word, becoming "sui juris in its own sphere, having to do only with the positive substance of the Gospel itself, back of all certification of what it is in

[371] John W. Nevin, "Jesus and the Resurrection," Mercersburg Review, 13 (1861), pp. 171-173.

[372] Nevin, "Jesus," pp. 177-181.

[373] Nevin, "Dorner's History," p. 277.

any other way." This faith process which produces "real union"

> assures the believer of his interest in Christ, and at the same time authenticates to him the truth of Christ and the reality of the Gospel, as they can be authenticated to him without this by no argument or proof besides.[374]

Again, the character of Mercersburg is clear. Their interpretation of the doctrine of the atonement enters their system by way of Mercersburg's mediation of the social, psychological and theological conditions which they seek to improve. The resulting interpretation of doctrine is characteristically practical, yet directed toward maintaining their perception of the advancement of orthodoxy. The logical consistency of their interpretation of doctrine is, by this token, subject to criticism, just as in their historical theory, the facts, there historical, here theological, play second fiddle to the idealistic goal.

DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH

In the case of the doctrine of the atonement the goal was to modify the popular yet "mechanical" doctrine which stressed humanity's forensic relationship with God. The idealistic goal was to see the atonement in terms of ongoing Christian "life." In order for the doctrine of the atonement to have "real effect" it needed to be apprehended by the Christian in the real life of the Church.

It was a radical departure from GRC practice when Nevin and Schaff began to conceive the notion of the Church within the GRC's confessional tradition and, especially for Nevin, within the sphere of the orthodox creeds. In their embracing a radical, churchly evangelical Catholicism they not only departed from GRC practice, but from the mediating position.

[374] Nevin, "Dorner's History," p. 277.

Mercersburg argued that the Church "flows from the redemption of Christ, and is a necessary part simply of the historical movement or process by which [the incarnation] is brought to take effect in the world."[375] The Church is the institution in which the history and future of the union established by Christ between God and man exists.[376] That union is organic and characterized by a dialectical process whereby the idea of the Church realizes itself in its historical manifestation. This understanding was developed by the Hegelian historical tradition.

As with Hegel the Church is described outwardly or institutionally, most frequently as the medieval Roman Catholic Church, which lost the essential concept of freedom endemic to Christianity and recovered it again in the Reformation. Hegel also described the Church inwardly, as a spiritual community.

For Hegel, the institution (the outward) and its idea (the inward) are identical. For Mercersburg, the departure from Hegel was toward Schelling, at least insofar as the idea, or inward identity of the Church, has not yet come to be in the institutional Church. Therefore, it is correct to say that while Mercersburg placed more emphasis on the historical phenomenon of the Church itself than would most of their American Protestant orthodox contemporaries, they remained committed to a doctrine of the Church which distinguishes the idea of the Church from its historical phenomenon and holds the Church's idea above its current physical appearance in history.

To some extent the extreme emphasis on the phenomenon of the Church was an attempt to recover what Mercersburg believed was nothing other than the objective character of the Church which was being lost to rationalism

[375] Nevin, "Answer," p. 583.

[376] Plumer, "Theology," p. 238.

in Europe and Puritanism in America. The loss of the objective or institutional side of the one Church was due to an overemphasis of the Reformation principles at the expense of ancient catholic principles.

But now in America the historical dialectic had so driven the Roman and Puritan systems apart, that the necessary resolution of this opposition had issued in a general crisis. Mercersburg declared that the crisis over the Church was culminating in America where the hostilities of the forces of Roman Catholicism and the forces of Protestantism had resulted in bloody violence and street brawling. Yet from that "chaotic struggle" Mercersburg believed that the "new epoch which seems to be at hand" may result, and a new "Protestant Catholicism" may emerge. For without the organic development of Christianity into such a union, Protestantism in America is doomed. Only if Protestantism can pass "beyond itself" can it hope to survive. Nevin concludes:

> All true redemption and salvation, in the case of the Church must come in the way of historical development, self-mediated under God, and in a certain sense self-produced.[377]

To another extent Mercersburg's emphasis on the phenomenon of the Church was motivated by their wholistic philosophy or phenomenology which believed that the division of the Church into visible and invisible qualities created an unrealistic abstraction. It is precisely this philosophic commitment which led to a doctrine of the Church in Schaff which Penzel declared conspicuously vague.

The confusion, however, derives from the question asked by Penzel. The question is, how can the ideal church and the real church be one and yet,

[377] Nevin, intro. to The Principle of Protestantism, pp. 16-18. And Nevin, "Liebner's Christology," p. 60.

as Schaff is quick to point out, quite distinct? Clearly the spiritual presence of Christ with his Church is unseen, and yet it is a true, historical presence. Schaff seems to imply that the phenomenon of the historical Church is both ideal and, in its yet unrealized nature, not ideal. Penzel is left to conclude that Schaff fused his Hegelian model with an apocalyptic New Testament motif.[378]

Were Merçersburg to have followed Hegel, the confusion would be resolved in Hegel's materialism. The members of the Church must reconcile themselves to the historical fact of the Church's present phenomenon. The Church is precisely what it is becoming. In Germany that was looking more and more like the state everyday. No wonder Schaff soon warmed to American denominationalism. On the other hand, had they followed the strict course of Schelling, the idea would become master, unmediated by what Mercersburg believed to be the objective progress of the Church through the orthodox confessional tradition.

Again, Mercersburg would sacrifice philosophical exactitude for their perception of the balance between two truths which, because of their extreme views, had pushed themselves into error. Therefore they invoked the principle of true inward organic development.

It is around this principle that the crisis of the Church actually revolves. Philosophically, on the question of the doctrine of the Church, Hegelianism stresses objectivity, as does Roman ecclesiology. In contrast, German mediating theology allows for too much subjectivity, as does Puritanism in America. Each is an extreme view the criticism and overcoming of which depends on an appeal to the inward organic principle. Christianity's identity is absolute. It "can never transcend itself." All

[378] Penzel, "Quest," p. 143 & 185.

that Christianity can become is latent in the faith founded by Christ and established in the original Church.[379]

Schriver says that this concept is essential to Schaff's historical work. In one of Schaff's later works he reflects his churchly preoccupation by describing a seldom appreciated third principle of Protestantism. The first we have mentioned as the primacy of Scripture. The second was the emphasis of faith over works. The third is the "ecclesiastical principle." It was ostensibly the concept of the priesthood of believers. Yet Schaff understands this priesthood as a seriously organized ecclesiastical body and not as a principle of individual authority in matters of faith. His point is that the Germans take only the first two principles seriously. Clearly his emphasis of the third principle suggests his interest in the Protestant high-church movement.[380]

The resulting view takes the phenomenon of the Church as an historically ideal principle working itself out toward the eschatologically depicted future anticipated in the character of St. John. That state was the realization of the Church as the kingdom of God on earth. Christ's presence, while a mystery, is real and unmediated, neither by objective conceptual models (Hegel) nor by the subjective individual possession of the spirit of inspiration (Puritanism). Balance is maintained in counteracting materialism by appeal to the unmediated mystical, real presence of Christ in the Church, and in counteracting subjectivism by appeal to Scripture and ecclesiastical tradition.

Yet the danger of walking the fence is that it is easy to fall over

[379] Nevin, intro. to The Principle of Protestantism, p. 20.

[380] Schriver, "Schaff's Concept," pp 77-144. Philip Schaff, "Modern Christianity," in History of the Christian Church, Vol. rev., ed., (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1888), p. 16.

onto either side, especially as your critics perceive you there already. And while the fence remains the construction of Mercersburg, its material is none other than the traditions against which they reacted.

Nichols has recognized this and Ryan has elaborated on Nichols' insight. It is Nichols' contention that while Mercersburg's philosophic interaction with the Mediating school was crucial for the development of their view of history, Mercersburg's churchly theology distinguished them from the mediators. Mercersburg, says Nichols, needs to be understood in this light. He writes:

> It is the high-church or catholicizing tendency within the framework of German idealism and historical thought which is the characteristic note of Mercersburg theology.[381]

Nichols continues to probe for the causal link. What is behind the high-church movement of the middle eighteen hundreds

> may be its intoxication with vitalistic categories for the religious community . . . . Earlier centuries had thought about the Church on juridical and mechanical models; now biology supplied the categories.[382]

Ryan develops this point in a similar direction. He begins with Mercersburg's understanding of the Hegelian concept of the organic whole. Christ is the organic source of the Church's life. Thus Christ is the source of the Church's authority and organization. Freedom and authority depend on Christ, and as Christ is unified with the whole of the Church the individual's freedom must be made subordinate to the whole.

This philosophic consideration serves not only as a criticism of the sect system in America, but also an argument for Catholicity. While

[381] Nichols, Mercersburg, p. 11.

[382] Nichols, Mercersburg, p. 12.

Nevin's earlier Presbyterian position emphasized Church unity from the standpoint of the threat of growing sectarianism, the high-church views stimulated by his philosophical reflections encouraged and deepened the same emphasis, yet added a catholic understanding of the organic development of the Church's role in world history.[383]

It was precisely the 'practical' ecclesiological considerations unique to America that separated Mercersburg from the German Mediating theologian Isaac Dorner.[384] Again, Mercersburg believed that it was in America that the issue of the Church would be decided. Nevin wrote:

> Here on this Western Continent is to be the arena where the Church Question, which all truly earnest men feel and know to be the greatest question of the age, is to be fought out . . . .[385]

Schaff fully concurred with his colleague. After becoming familiar with the American denominational system, he felt optimistic that the freedom given the Church in the United States made this country the likely site of Christendom's reunion.[386]

Yet Mercersburg's ecclesiology was far from purely practical. Mercersburg concluded that the Church was forever one, undivided by material distinctions.[387] Furthermore, the Church is an "object of faith." It is the supernatural "new creation" which has broken into the old creation of nature. It is Christ's own body wherein is mediated Christ

[383] Ryan, "Nevin," pp. 34-35.

[384] Nichols, Mercersburg, pp. 181-182.

[385] Nevin, "Commencement," pp. 496-497.

[386] Philip Schaff, Germany: Its Universities, Theology and Religion, With Sketches of Distinguished Divines of the Age (Philadelphia: Lindsay and Blakiston, 1857), p. 105 and pp. 123-124.

[387] John W. Nevin, "Thoughts on the Church," Mercersburg Review, 10 (1858), p. 171.

himself as he works to renew the world.[388]

In articulating this position Mercersburg recognized their breach of the Scottish informed American Presbyterian theological tradition. Their organic view of the Church as the body of Christ in the world developed from the idea that Christ himself constitutes the word of God. The Gospel of Jesus Christ, for Mercersburg, was revealed in the person of Jesus Christ. Unlike the tradition against which they reacted, where the Church is the loosely constructed community which testifies to the Gospel, Mercersburg saw the Church as the organic development of the Gospel, having its life and seed in the Gospel itself. Church and Gospel are inexorably linked.

The conflict of these two opposing views can be witnessed in Nevin's classroom lectures. Dick's theology takes as proof for the validity of the Gospel the rapid success of the Gospel's message among the pagans. Nevin decries Dick's position as, again, mechanical and unhistorical. It is the Church which is the proof of the Gospel. It is the Church as she has developed herself organically and preserved her life and tradition through the centuries which gives far better "proof" for the validity of the Gospel than the proofs of external evidence could ever give.[389]

Mercersburg saw the recognition of the inexorable link of Gospel and Church as the deep cure to the sectarian problem, one that could sink deeper into the infection than could the merely surface "cures" offered by the Scottish Presbyterian tradition. While Princeton fought to keep the

[388] Nevin, "Letter," p. 2.

[389] Erb, Nevin's Classroom Lectures, pp. 36-39.

Presbyterian Church unified, their arguments missed the heart of the matter by seeing revival methods as the symptom of a bad theology. Mercersburg considered revivalist theology to be the product of the Puritan system of theology itself, which promulgated sectarian principles. Princeton simply attacked the methods without touching the principles. Disunity was sown directly into Puritan and sectarian thinking. In contrast, Mercersburg's concept of the unity of the Gospel and the Church promoted the principle of unity by placing the authority of the Church above the authority of the individual. Mercersburg stressed the importance of remaining with the Church even when, for awhile, the Church might be in error.[390]

The unity of Gospel and Church derives from Christ himself. In the call and response to Christ's supernatural presence as the son of God, the Church becomes the divine institution God intended before all time and is confessed as such in the creeds. Confessing the Church is as essential as any of the creedal elements, since the response to Christ's person in faith is a necessary corollary to the Church's divinity.

Likewise, from the Church proceeds all that the new creation is for the world. Contained within the unity of the confessing body is the catholicity which will one day encompass all of creation. Richard Wentz writes that in this Nevin believed that the Church

> has 'the whole presence of the new creation . . . lodged in its constitution from the start, and through all centuries.' Catholicity is present in a fullness that pervades 'the whole compass and contents of our universal life,' a fullness that stamps a radical 'no' on any attempt to claim that wholeness by any individual or collectivity.[391]

[390] Erb, Nevin's Classroom Lectures, p. 58.

[391] Richard Wentz, "Radical Catholicity in America," Anglican Theological Review, 58 (1976), p. 8.

So, again, while Nevin's earlier Presbyterian position emphasized Church unity from the standpoint of the threat of growing sectarianism, his high-Church views, which were developed in his contact with German Idealism in all of its various forms yet applied within his American context, produced a similar emphasis. The important later distinction is Nevin's catholic understanding of the organic development of world history.[392]

As we have observed, Nichols and others have recorded the 'practical' ecclesiastical considerations unique to America that separated Mercersburg from the German mediating theologians.[393] Again, Mercersburg believed it would be in America that the issue of the Church would be decided.[394]

But we have also cautioned that Mercersburg's ecclesiology was far from simply a study in practical matters.[395] It was metaphysical (even mystical) and creedal as well.

The unity of Gospel and Church is confessed in the ancient creeds in their summary of the Gospel as they always include the fact of the Church's catholic unity as a statement of belief co-equal with all of the creedal elements. Since the Church's economy is supernatural, yet objective, having a real historical existence, it is often spoken of as having both visible and invisible qualities. Mercersburg found more confusion than clarity in this distinction. They treated the division of the Church into visible and

[392] Ryan, "Nevin," pp. 34-35. Nichols points out the practicality implicit in Mercersburg's catholic perspective. He suggests that their ecclesiology emphasized the high-church doctrine, tradition and the ministry over the more modern confessions and over bishops because such confessions functioned for the Continent to insure the church's legal authority, as did the institution of bishops in Anglican cultures. Such sanctions were unnecessary in America. In Nichols, Mercersburg, p. 14.

[393] Nichols, Mercersburg, pp. 181-182.

[394] Nevin, "Commencement," pp. 496-497.

[395] Schaff, Germany, p. 105 and pp. 123-124.

invisible parts more as an heuristic description than as an ontological reality. They preferred speaking of objective or outward form, and subjective or inward essence, such that the Church's dialectical quality is never disrupted by seeing one quality as independent of the other. Nevertheless their critics came to see them as stressing the visible over the invisible such that the visible Church was the only true Church.

THE OBJECTIVE QUALITY OF THE CHURCH

Traditionally, in most cases, the invisible church was the ideal church. Invisible and ideal came to be one and the same. As Mercersburg sought to recover what they perceived to be the loss of the Church's objective quality, they were accused of romanizing tendencies. Yet their so-called emphasis on the objective was more subtle than that. It has been more correctly understood by recent writers on Mercersburg as the natural outgrowth of their organic view of the Church coupled with their strong reaction to sectarianism. The style of the emphasis of the objective Church has been appropriately described as romantic. Here the organic and historical metaphors seek to encompass the entirety of the faith in a system of historical organic development. It has also been recognized that this subtle distinction of the objective quality of the Church was Mercersburg's peculiar departure from the Mediating school as Nevin himself described it as deriving from his own theological reflections and the practical concerns facing the leadership of the GRC in America. Thus Nevin does distinguish Mercersburg's emphasis from both Germany and England, although he sees the similarity here with England in their mutual appreciation of the creeds.

Yet the seed of the emphasis on the objective Church seems to have been planted at Mercersburg by Rauch. In his "The Ecclesiastical

Historiography of Germany,"[396] Rauch felt called upon to update the GRC on the latest historiographical work being done in Germany, including his observations on the progress of German ecclesiology. Naturally he choose Hegel for his model.

It was Hegel, says Rauch, who raised again to Protestant consciousness the crucial "Idea of the Church." This idea exists in Christ and constitutes a unified identity. However, as Christ is unified in mankind the history of the Church and the history of Christ do remain separate. The visible Church is distinct from Christ as an historical institution, yet related to him in his inward relationship to the individual believers. Each retains his identity while each identity is fully related to the other. The institutional church derives directly from the principle of Christ and is identical with it. (Here the metaphor is a tree and its parts. Each part shares its identity with the tree, but each is distinct from the tree. The metaphor was often repeated by Nevin.)

Rauch was also the first to take his departure from the Mediating theologians who began subjectively. Here Rauch names Neander. Says Rauch, Neander begins with the principle of the invisible church and describes all of the ways in which the visible church is at variance with its invisible principle. In contrast Rauch concludes:

> The first and most indispensable requisite of the historian according to Hegel's school is not only its acknowledgment of this idea of the invisible Church as realizing itself in history but to exhibit all ecclesiastical actions and all systems of divinity as proceeding from it or as being at least indirectly qualified by it, not indeed in an abstract way, but by being communicated to the mind of man and by living and acting in it.[396]

[396] Frederick A. Rauch, "The Ecclesiastical Historiography of Germany," rpt. Reformed Church Review, 9 (1905), p. 401.

Nevin's conception of the creedal Church included his attempt to maintain the inward and outward qualities of the Church without being forced to choose either the strict Hegelian or the mediating position. For him belief in the substance of the Apostles' Creed joined the subjective with the objective and thereby constituted the real starting point of ecclesiology. Yet his orthodox idealism insisted that the idea of the Church exists before all time. The Creed itself does not recognize the abstraction of visible and invisible, but recognizes instead the universal life of Christianity "which must necessarily precede in the order of actual being all particular Christian life."[397]

Nevertheless, the Church's catholicity or universality is not merely an idea. Mercersburg rejected the common understanding and division of the Church into invisible and visible and the subsequent neutralizing of the Church's catholicity. They believed this arbitrary distinction kept these qualities poles apart, encouraging the atomization of the Church's oneness. In this understanding the visible church is defined as the total assemblage of all Christians, past, present and future. The effect is to abstract the "true invisible church" from the actual world, leaving the Church's catholicity as an always unrealized future state.[398]

Nevin criticised Dick's "abstract" doctrine of the Church as presented in his lectures.[399] He concluded that the false rationalism which makes objectivity an independent and merely empirical quality, while subjectivity

[397] Nevin, "Answer," p. 579.

[398] Erb, Nevin's Classroom Lectures, pp. 422-461.

[399] Dick, Lectures, pp. 454-512.

remains a purely invisible bond, can never truly reconcile the objective with the subjective. For Nevin the error lies in the naive idea that the subjective simply produces the objective, that the invisible simply gives rise to the visible.[400]

Likewise Schaff sought to integrate the Augustinian notion of visible and invisible qualities according to the modern methods of historiography. Both qualities, says Schaff, are indispensable. Both give rise at once to the one "idea" of the Church.[401] Furthermore, this idea comes to be in the Church's "life." The unity of each begins and proceeds from the organic mystery of Christ's person as he encounters individuals through the operation of the Holy Spirit (whose life and influence was less played down by Schaff than by Nevin).

The principle of mediation is as much at work here as it was at work in other aspects of the Mercersburg system. The corrective introduced to the American Protestant religious establishment was the assertion that, "The Church does not rest upon its members, but the members rest upon the Church." And while Christ's presence in the Church is first of all inward and invisible as an idea, this idea "must" become actual in history and life. Quite early on Nevin concluded that even though at times it appears that the Church is going backwards instead of forwards, its progress is always towards greater unity.[402]

Perhaps Nevin's most complete statement on the subject is found in his

[400] Erb, Nevin's Classroom Lectures, p. 442.

[401] Schriver, "Schaff's Concept," pp. 71-107.

[402] John W. Nevin, "Catholic Unity," Weekly Messenger of the German Reformed Church, 9 (New Series), No. 49 (1844), p. 1861.

sermon on the Church, 1847. Each aspect of the relationship between the outward and inward qualities of the Church are treated. The conclusion is one which by now is familiar. The actual Church is always the same containing in her history "the power of a single fact." Yet she is always in process. As such she always anticipates but never achieves the ideal (at least until Christ's return). Her error and sin are proof of that. Nevertheless her eventual triumph is marked by successive developments in an evolutionary process of self-actualization, and thus, "The historical Church is always the true Church; but never a pure or perfect Church." And wherever a divisive spirit moves against this historical, true Church, such that it would divide her by disrupting her unity, there is the spirit of "anti-Christ."[403]

The true spirit of Christ is none other than the spirit of unity. And the direction of the spirit for Mercersburg was the vision of the future of the Church as depicted in the synthesis of St. John. Here the antithetical poles of St. Peter and St. Paul are reconciled by the "philosopher" who drew the line between legalism and gnosticism.[404]

This unity had its seed in the personalities of the great apostles. Yet the Church's development required the polarizing of each of these characteristics. Mercersburg believed that this development had produced the present crisis in the Church. Yet the tensions were often misunderstood by historians and theologians. Neither the anti-sacramental direction of

[403] John W. Nevin, "The Church; A Sermon (1847), a sermon in Addresses Essays of Schaff, Nevin, and etc. Schaff's personal edition, Princeton Theological Seminary Library, n.p., n.d.

[404] Philip Schaff, "The Life and Character of St. John," Mercersburg Review, 2 (1850), pp. 590-603.

Protestantism, nor the purely outward formalism of the Episcopalian church could bring relief from the present anxieties. Nor could Rome. Nor could the new dispensations like "wretched" Mormonism. None of these understood the historical forces which brought about the crisis, nor did they represent the organic product of the historical forces themselves. The only real alternative was one in which Roman Catholicism and Protestantism recognize themselves as simply transitional states in the Church's life. In this recognition progress could be made and the crisis resolved. Nevin argued that Protestants must cease their useless attempt to either ignore the Roman church or blame it for the present crisis. Rather, Protestantism must attempt

> to surmount in due season the painful contradictions, (dialectical thorns,) of the Protestant controversy as this now stands, and so to carry it triumphantly forward to its own last sense, (the type neither of St. Peter nor of St. Paul but of both rather as brought together by St. John,) in some form that shall be found at the same time to etherealize and save, in the same way, the last sense also and rich wealth of the old Catholic faith.[405]

The outcome, for Mercersburg, was never in doubt. What was in doubt was whether Protestants would recognize the inevitable and save themselves from the fate of anachronism. Unless Protestantism recognizes that the true Church is constituted in a principle of catholicity, and rejects the Puritan infestation which dismisses this founding principle, it is doomed to go the way of the dinosaurs. Catholicity is essential since catholicity is the means by which the Church grows into the kingdom of heaven.[406]

[405] John W. Nevin, "The Anglican Crisis," Mercersburg Review, 3 (1851), pp. 391-395.

[406] John W. Nevin, "Catholicism," Mercersburg Review, 3 (1851), p. 7.

The spearhead of Nevin's attack was aimed at Protestantism. It is a question why he was more critical of Protestantism than of Roman Catholicism, a clear reversal of his years at Princeton and Western. Certainly it was in one sense the method of the corrective which he perceived would balance American Protestantism's emphasis of individual freedom in religion which fueled sectarianism. Yet most authors sense in Nevin, even more than Schaff, a certain romantic fascination with Roman Catholicism.

Nichols writes that Nevin's "ecumenical vocation" was in this very sense "romantic," as was his fascination with the early church fathers.[407] Says Nichols, Nevin's articles on early Christianity served to establish Newman's thesis that, "the type and genius of the ancient church was reproduced far more accurately by modern Roman Catholicism than by any Protestant body."[408]

Nevin's reading of the fathers produced in him a sympathetic understanding of the forms usually despised by Protestants, such as relics, prayers for the dead, and intercession of the saints.[409] And nowhere is Nevin's 'empathy' with the fathers more evident than where it is pushed to the "point of extrapolation" in his study of Cyprian.[410] Yet even in this his most "Roman" stage, Nevin derives from Cyprian the qualification that it is the "community of life" which constitutes the Church, more than "episcopacy" or "papal primacy." The Church is a "divine society"

[407] Nichols, Romanticism, pp. 189-199.

[408] Nichols, Romanticism, p. 200.

[409] Nichols, Romanticism, p. 203.

[410] Nichols, Romanticism, p. 276.

organized, operated and unified in the world. It is an "historical reality" having a life like other historical institutions. Yet this insight led to a poignant and for recalcitrant Protestants, a dangerous question. Is not the Roman Church a more consistent example of this "community of life?"[411]

As clear as Nevin made himself, for recalcitrant Protestants like James Good, Nevin's insights were nothing other than an "exaltation of the visible Church in catholicism," which followed from his emphasis on the "objective." Good mistakenly sees this as resulting from Nevin's Schellingian philosophical base along with his high-church ecclesiology which came to him from Pusey and Kliefoth. Schaff in contrast, says Good, had his philosophical base in Hegel who was less objective. Yet, says Good, Schaff was "unguarded" in his advise to students.[412]

Nevin himself readily admitted that Cyprian's doctrine of the Church shaped his entire theological system.[413] It was from Cyprian that Nevin came to understand the idea of the Holy Catholic Church as an article of faith, and as a real institution, having its origin in the supernatural. As such it

> carries in itself its own laws, its own attributes, its own prerogatives and powers, and refuses to come into subjection in any way to human opinion or human plan.[414]

As Nichols has said, Nevin intended to draw a sharp distinction between the Church in Cyprian's day and the claims made by Protestant

[411] Nichols, Romanticism, pp. 227-278.

[412] Good, History, p. 312.

[413] John W. Nevin, "Cyprian: Second Article," Mercersburg Review, 4 (1852), p. 346.

[414] Nevin, "Cyprian: Second," p. 358.

bodies such as the Congregationalists who claimed to represent original Christianity. And yet Nevin did point out that, neither was Cyprian "answerable exactly to the Papal system . . . . "[415] Nevin's point brought out the desired concept which was that the Church in the time of Cyprian was a free and divine institution having both an inward spiritual thrust as well as an objective and developed institutional structure centered around the offices of sacrament, priesthood, etc.[416] His conclusion was that the demeaning of the outward structure by the Baptists and Congregationalists, and the absence of any inward spiritual thrust in Anglicanism demonstrated the emptiness of the claims by modern day Protestant churches to historical similarity or repristination of the Apostolic Church. Rather, the historical record indicated to him that the "Catholic form" of the Church advanced steadily to the Reformation, and there moved to a far more advanced stage. Now it awaits a third and subsequent development where the two contrasting forms will again advance to a "far more glorious consumation in time to come."[417]

It would be a transgression against the mainstream of Mercersburg thought to suggest that Schaff followed his colleague to these same conclusions. Yet no evidence exists which suggests that Schaff disagreed with Nevin, other than the Protestant conservatism of Schaff's later "Union" years. It is evident that Schaff's "romantic" fascination with the ancient Roman tradition was as great as Nevin's such that they fully shared the conclusion that Christianity developed continuously to the Reformation.

[415] Nevin, "Cyprian: Second," pp. 358-366.

[416] Nevin, "Cyprian: Fourth," pp. 544-555.

[417] Nevin, "Cyprian: Fourth," p. 561.

Furthermore, Schaff demonstrated his appreciation of the ancient rites, offices and traditions of the Roman tradition, as evidenced in his liturgical and historical work. Where the two may have separated was over the question mentioned earlier by Nichols. It appears that at the point of asking which denomination currently comes 'nearest' to the divine continuation of the Apostolic tradition (neither one thought that any denomination, including Rome, was Cyprianic), they both may have answered Rome. Yet when it came to the next question, should one then not submit to Rome's authority? Nevin came closest to answering yes.

But in fact his answer, while less firm than Schaff's, was ultimately no. They both preferred to work for the synthesis, Schaff perhaps more optimistically than Nevin. Yet the real effect of their study of the fathers produced what must be considered one of the most remarkable documents in the history of the American Reformed Churches. The document is Henry Harbaugh's, "Synodical Church Authority," 1860. And while its doctrine of the Church was never practiced by a Reformed body, it represents the momentary flourish and influence of Mercersburg's ecclesiology and the direction they would have had the GRC go.

Harbaugh was first a student at Mercersburg and then a leader in the movement. Good described him as "the aesthetic leader of the Mercersburg theology," whose artistic talents were applied to Reformed worship. It was Harbaugh's writing which had a tremendous impact on the denomination's concept of worship, and Harbaugh's views came directly from the teaching of Nevin and Schaff.[418] For Harbaugh the GRC is obligated to the Protestant Reformed tradition whose confessions constitute its existence. That is the

[418] Good, History, p. 342.

objective source of its faith. And it is that institutional quality which is able to resist the Puritan tendency to rest faith on inward inclinations alone. Only the faith which carries the subject "out of himself" to a source beyond his individual nature will stand the test of time.[419]

Harbaugh's working of Nevin and Schaff's theology into the subject of worship sought to bring GRC worship into harmony with Mercersburg cultus, such that worship brought together "time, space and the new humanity in Christ [consecrating] its surroundings, making the natural become the medium of the supernatural."[420]

Says Good, Harbaugh's development of Mercersburg doctrine of the Church finally issued in the "magna charta" of the movement's "high-church" expressions, his "Synodical Church Authority."[421] The question posed by Harbaugh in this article was, where does Church authority lie?[422] Harbaugh's conclusion is that Christ gave authority to the Church in the form of a counsel. Therefore, given this recognition along with a proper understanding of the development of German Reformed ecclesiastical government it must be affirmed that the synod represents for the Church the "highest earthly authority." The synod has final say on doctrinal and moral error. From the synod power flows downward to the classis and finally to the consistory and their congregations. But only as the synod sees fit.[423]

Although Harbaugh's hierarchy of ecclesiastical authority represents

[419] Nevin, "Church," pp. 3-4.

[420] Good, History, p. 342.

[421] Good, History, p. 477.

[422] Henry Harbaugh, "Synodical Church Authority," Mercersburg Review, 12 (1860), p. 127.

[423] Harbaugh, "Authority," p. 129.

his theory of Reformed tradition, the fact is that no Reformed synod has ever functioned according to Harbaugh's ideal. Mercersburg's expectations were cast in a concept of centralized authority which may or may not be truly Reformed. And while Mercersburg did much to strengthen the overall integrity of the GRC Synod they never achieved their goal in which, "The Synod is the culmination of authority; and it exercises the binding and loosing power over all the departments which lie beneath it." Again, this concept emerged from Mercersburg's identification of the Church directly with the "kingdom of God on earth," a concept which is extremely rare among the American Reformed Churches.[424]

Yet the direction Mercersburg would have had the GRC go, while perhaps a bit ahead of its time in the nineteenth century, has found some vindication in the ecumenical ventures of recent years. We have mentioned the Notre Dame thesis of Nathan Mitchell. There is also a thesis on Nevin by John Cordoue from the Catholic University of America. Cordoue has looked at Nevin on the Church and compared him with the findings of Vatican II in order that this comparison might stimulate dialogue between Catholics and Protestants.[425] In contrast the merger of the GRC with the United Church of Christ must be seen as a step in the opposite direction of what Mercersburg would have hoped for the GRC. The UCC's pluralistic model of ecclesiastical government is a far cry from the highly centralized synodical authority described by Harbaugh.

THE CREED

According to Nevin Cyprian's doctrine of the Church followed the

[424] Harbaugh, "Authority," pp. 129-130.

[425] John T. Cordoue, "The Ecclesiology of John Williamson Nevin: A Catholic Appraisal," Diss. The Catholic University of America 1969.

course of the Apostles' Creed. In following the ancient tradition, but more as a peculiar insight arising from Nevin's own theological study, Mercersburg elevated the Apostles' Creed above all other symbols and confessions primarily for what he believed was its organic origin. More than any other symbol the Apostles' Creed spoke the faith of the Church without deriving primarily from the battle in the Church with heretical doctrines. Nevin saw the creedal elements rooted in the Church's encounter with Christ, and developing from that encounter into a full-fledged statement of the Church's confession.

For Nevin the Creed revolved around the Church's intuition of the Trinity which was revealed by Christ. Thus the Creed is fundamentally christological, making the mystery of the Trinity the objective fact which makes possible all of the creedal elements. It is the mystery whereby humanity can be lifted to a higher order of life and released from the law of sin.[426] So, for Mercersburg, the first characteristic of their system, the incarnation, is immediately followed by the second characteristic, and that is the Apostles' Creed. It is directly from the Creed that the doctrine of the Church receives its high status in the system.[427]

The priority of the Creed over the other symbols partly stemmed from its antiquity. Yet Mercersburg did not believe it was composed by the Apostles. Nevertheless, they were convinced that the Creed never compromised or altered the apostolic faith. Instead the later origin demonstrated to their satisfaction the Creed's ability to incorporate the various facets and levels of the early faith and then speak that faith

[426] Nevin, "Cyprian: Second," p. 357.

[427] Nevin, "Answer," p. 574.

universally and with one voice.[428]

Nevin argued that christocentric theology was fundamental to the Creed. The form of the Creed displays the proper response of the corporate community to the inward experience of Christ. In this it does not represent merely a rationale of the faith, nor a summary, but "a direct transcript, we may say, of what the Gospel is to the contemplation of the believer, turned wholly upon the Person of Christ."[429]

Nichols' assessment of Nevin's understanding of the Creed focuses on the latter's exuberant praise. Here was a corporate expression which emerged with the same primordial necessity as language, and not by the whim or creative urge of the theologian. For Nichols Nevin's support of the Creed was characteristically "romantic." And the stimulus for Mercersburg's continued support of the Creed issued from the same romantically influenced high-church circle which participated in the ecclesiastical debates in the Prussian General Synod of 1846. Nichols writes,

> There, when Nitzsch and Dorner proposed a new formula for ordination, Gerlach campaigned against the "Nitzscheanum" in the name of the Apostles' Creed and the "Niceanum."[430]

Ryan, on the other hand, places first importance on Nevin's own study of the ancient Church. Yet Nichols' insight is significant for its recognition of the Creed's importance over against the wishes of the Dorner party. For it was on the question of the Creed that Nevin challenged Dorner in print and thus distinguished Mercersburg from the mediating group of

[428] Nevin, "New Liturgy," p. 34.

[429] Nevin, "New Liturgy," p. 35.

[430] Nichols, Mercersburg, p. 13.

theologians who must be kept distinct from the Gerlach party.

In his "Answer to Professor Dorner" Nevin appealed to the Creed which rejects Dorner's rationalistic starting point. The Church is not merely a sum which remains dependent on its parts, but "a whole comprehending its parts in itself, and possessing them with its presence." It is "the union of particular existences and a general existence through the power of a common life."[431]

According to Nevin, no metaphysical system need support this claim. Rather, the mystery determines the sense of the Creed itself, not the other way around. The Church's insight is in its tying itself in with the "organic redemption" of an organically fallen creation.

> To believe now in such an organic power of redemption, the actual presence in the world of a constitution of grace no less real than the constitution of man's fallen life on the outside of it; to believe in this as the result of Christ's victory over sin and death, the fruit of His resurrection, and the form of His presence and working in the world through the Spirit to the end of time; to believe in all this, I say, is to believe what is substantially the article of the Holy Catholic Church in the Creed.[432]

Against Dorner and many American evangelicals Nevin explicitly made the Creed and not the Bible the second characteristic of the Mercersburg system. He argued that the giving of the Holy Spirit to the Church was not connected to the giving of Holy Scriptures. Neither are the Holy Scriptures mentioned in the Creed. Before the canon came to be, the fundamentals of the Christian faith which issued directly from the revelation of the Trinity and the person of Christ were established and became the divine source of the New Testament texts. "The Church, on the contrary, is there,

[431] Nevin, "Answer," p. 577.

[432] Nevin, "Answer," p. 579.

not by accident, but through the immanent law of the Creed itself."[433]

The form of Christianity, for Nevin, is nothing other than the "array of facts" presented in the Apostles' Creed. These facts represent the objective character of the faith. Each tenet of the Creed is to be apprehended by the Christian not by the means popular among common sense realists or rationalists, through natural understanding or logical or empirical proofs. Rather, each tenet must authenticate itself to the believing consciousness "in an a-priori way, as necessary deductions from the primary fact of Christianity, the actual coming of Christ in the flesh."[434]

The Church became conscious of the full implications of the incarnation gradually. The Creed reflects this gradual process and mirrors identically the dialectical process of the Church's comprehension of who Christ is.

The Apostles met Christ in the flesh and Christ imparted his spirit to them after his ascension. From the moment of encounter the inward transformation began. That inward faith has always been a part of the Creed's existence. But the inward faith must always give itself to outward expression. Such was Peter's statement: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."[435]

Nevin states that the inward faith came to full expression in the Creed by the second century, however the creedal elements were not always

[433] Nevin, "Answer," p. 581.

[434] John W. Nevin, "Origin and Structure of the Apostles' Creed," Mercersburg Review, 16 (1869), p. 155.

[435] John W. Nevin, "The Apostles' Creed: Its Outward History," Mercersburg Review, 1 (1849), pp. 107-111.

in the same order nor did every church include all of the elements. Like other symbols the Creed had the practical function of resisting heresy. And it has remained authoritative for the Protestant church, says Nevin, even in the face of its recent rejection by the Puritan church for being "obsolete."[436]

For Nevin the Creed could never become obsolete, since in its corporate expression of the believer's experience of Christ it participates in the union of God and man. It is not a doctrine given to the mind for its consideration, to measure its ability to stand up to experience. Rather it is faith given expression. It is meant to be incorporated by each individual believer's faculty for faith.[437]

In the contents of the Creed the individual's faith apprehends the divine world given by the Creed and the individual becomes fully aware of the unseen world of God's habitation. Indeed the individual is brought into contact with that world. Thus faith meets Creed as the eye meets the sun and thereby sees the world around it. And what the believer sees is none other than the substance of the faith given in the form of the Creed, Jesus Christ.[438]

The Creed's organic growth mirrors also the growth of the awareness of Christ in his Church. It reflects the fulfilling of revelation and the promise that Christ would guide his Church. This, says Nevin, refutes the Hegelian argument that the growth of doctrine developed by means of objective development, where certain ideas triumphed over competing ideas.

[436] Nevin, "Creed: Outward," pp. 112-126.

[437] John W. Nevin, "The Apostles' Creed: Its Inward Constitution and Form," Mercersburg Review, 1 (1849), pp. 202-205.

[438] Nevin, "Creed: Inward," pp. 211-212.

The development of doctrine was always conditioned by an organic and supernatural principle that doctrine developed from the seed which was Christ's life. Thus the faith as a life expresses itself as developing self-consciousness, having as its source a supernatural existence.[439]

The close association Nevin makes of Creed with faith turns his work, which is designedly an article in a series on the Apostles' Creed, into an article on faith. He describes how the Apostle Peter could not have believed, in fact was unaware of, the Trinity. Yet he was the rock upon which the Church was built, even though he could never have understood "the Church" as the instrument of Christ's work in the world. At the same time it is impossible to say his Christianity was incomplete.

Likewise today, Nevin contends, there are Christians unaware of even the most basic doctrines of the faith. Not to mention children baptised in the faith. Therefore, faith must be held distinct from doctrine. Yet doctrine grows from faith as fruit from a tree. In faith the Church apprehended Christ first as a living reality and thus embraced the truth of his meaning for the world in that apprehension. Yet that apprehension was set forth fully later, in the Creed. As such, all of the elements were there originally as potential.[440]

Yet in spite of the significance of the Creed for the Mercersburg system it is precisely this question, namely the importance of the Creed, which must be seen as the most clear theological split between Nevin and Schaff. Still, it is hard to determine how early and how strongly Schaff voiced his objection to Nevin's placing such stress on the Creed. Again,

[439] Nevin, "Creed: Inward," pp. 215-219.

[440] John W. Nevin, "The Apostles' Creed: Its Material Structure or Organism," Mercersburg Review, 1 (1849), pp. 315-317.

the disagreement was over the relative weight given the Creed, not the Creed's importance. Throughout Schaff's career he never doubted the absolute necessity of the trinitarian confession and he included among the elect only those who "can join in every clause of the Apostles' Creed, of the Gloria in Excelsis and the Te Deum."[441]

The clearest reaction by Schaff to Nevin's position on the Creed comes quite late. And Schaff remains consistently irenic and names no one directly in calling attention to the problem of overemphasizing the creeds. What Schaff does is to take a more traditionally Reformed position by placing Scripture over the creeds.

He stands with Nevin in arguing that faith precedes the Creed, and in saying that the Creed presupposes faith. Each include the inward principle of Christ's life in the world. And Schaff is bold to say there would have been creeds even had there been no controversies.[442]

The distinction begins with Schaff's statement that,

> In the Protestant system, the authority of symbols, as of all human compositions, is relative and limited. It is not co-ordinate with, but always subordinate to, the Bible, as the only infallible rule of the Christian faith and practice. The value of the creeds depends upon their agreement with the Scriptures.[443]

While Nevin makes the Apostles' Creed dependent on the Word, it is the living Word of Christ. And the Bible is not made identical to the Word. In fact he suggests that the written word follows from the confession which in

[441] Philip Schaff, The Reunion of Christendom (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1893), pp. 2-3.

[442] Philip Schaff, "History of the Creeds of Christendom," in Creeds of Christendom, Vol. I, 6th ed. (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1877), p. 5.

[443] Schaff, "Creeds," p. 7.

essence is the source of the Apostles' Creed. Schaff also recognizes this as a natural and organic progression. Yet he wants either to cordon off the categories or to express himself more traditionally or conservatively. In this work Schaff is describing the Reformed position on the creeds. Yet it is quite clear that he himself shares this view with the Reformed tradition. He says,

> The Bible is of God; the Confession is man's answer to God's word . . . . The Bible has, therefore, a divine and absolute, the Confession only an ecclesiastical and relative authority.[444]

Schaff concludes with the warning, one most likely aimed at high-church Anglicanism and not at Nevin, "Any higher view of the authority of symbols is un-Protestant and essentially Romanizing."[445]

It was Nevin who elevated the Apostles' Creed above the other symbols. It seems especially strange given Mercersburg's pioneering ecumenicity. Certainly it was not the Creed's antiquity which gave it prominence in Nevin's eyes. Rather the Apostles' Creed found favor with Nevin for the way his understanding of the Creed fit his own philosophical and theological system. Those inclinations stemmed primarily from his organic model of development. For Nevin the Apostles' Creed, much more than the other creeds, arose from the communal consciousness of the early church. It grew, so to speak, from the relationship of the believers with Christ such that it became the linguistic or intellectual form of a completely mystical or supernatural existence in the shared life of God with mankind. All subsequent creeds and confessions were a reflection on that intimate

[444] Schaff, "Creeds," p. 7.

[445] Schaff, "Creeds," p. 7.

relationship. For Nevin the Creed represents the fundamental movement of Christianity itself. To utter the Creed with both heart and mouth is to have the faith in its essence and to give it form in its utterance. In this the Creed can never be rejected or superseded.[446]

THE SACRAMENTS

Mercersburg described the christocentric life that permeates the Creed in sacramental terms using the same familiar metaphor of organic union. Organic union was the real process by which the doctrine of the Church, as an article of the Apostolic religion, would inform all of the other articles of faith. For Nevin, since the Mercersburg theology is a churchly theology, it cannot be other than a sacramental theology as well. The source of the union between Christ and his Church is precisely the source of the union between Christ and the sacraments. That source is organic life. As such it insures the reality of the Church's experience and provides the proper idea of how Christ is actually present in the sacraments, such that by the power of the "Holy Ghost" the invisible grace is bound together with the mediating elements or symbols, "not physically or locally," but nevertheless really and truly.[447]

The controversy over the nature of Christ's presence in the sacraments became the great sacramental issue of Mercersburg. Yet the issue was argued almost exclusively in reference to the Eucharist, leaving Mercersburg's consideration of the doctrine of Baptism considerably weaker than its doctrine of the Lord's Supper and constructed primarily in the form of polemic.

According to Plummer the ancient source of Mercersburg's sacramental

[446] John W. Nevin, "The Apostles' Creed," Mercersburg Review, 16 (1869), pp. 313-315.

[447] Nevin, "New Liturgy," pp. 43-44.

theology of the Lord's Supper was Melancthon and Calvin.[448] Nichols, however, identifies the more immediate source in Heinrich Heppe whose influence, as mediated by Philip Schaff, convinced Nevin to drop his predestinarianism for the "theory of the Melancthonian character of the Palatinate Reformation." Nevin became convinced that Melancthon and Calvin thought alike on the Eucharist, and he found Melancthon's distance from the harsh doctrine of predestination to his liking. Likewise, Schaff was more devoted to Melancthon than to Calvin and Zwingli. With his colleague, Schaff held a Reformed perspective on the Holy Supper, while his views on worship, devotion and hymns were decidedly Lutheran.[449]

Earlier than both Plummer and Nichols, James Good identified the Melancthonian sympathy in the Mercersburg sacramental movement along with their innovation of a modern psychological theory. Good writes:

> His [Nevin's] aim, however, was to bring the great Reformer [Calvin] up to date. Three men have claimed to do this in the nineteenth century, Schweitzer [sic] of Switzerland, Schleiermacher of Germany, and Nevin in America. . . . Nevin endeavored to re-state not the decrees of Calvin as they had done, but his doctrine of the Lord's Supper.[450]

Good holds that Nevin departed from Calvin on several points, all of

[448] Plummer, "Theology," pp. 380-400.

[449] Nichols, Mercersburg, pp. 19-20. Perhaps the finest work done establishing Melancthon's (this spelling was used by Mercersburg rather than the common "Melanchthon") crucial role in the development of the Reformed church in the Palatinate was by Bard Thompson. His doctoral dissertation on this subject was followed by an article which contained the substance of his thesis. It appeared in the Bulletin of the Theological Seminary of the Evangelical and Reformed Church under the title, "Melancthon and the German Reformed Church," 24, No. 4, 1953, 162-185. Thompson concludes that Melancthon developed a doctrine of the Lord's Supper which was synergistic. Rather than try to describe the mode of Christ's presence in the Eucharist, Melancthon sought to reconcile the various parties around a concept of "consociation," where progress could be made on points of agreement and silence maintained on points of difference.

[450] Good, History, pp. 236-237.

which resulted from his advancing idealistic philosophic principles unknown to Calvin. But Good's major complaint was over the question of the role of the Holy Spirit. Good concludes that Calvin firmly believed that "the union with Christ was mediated by the Holy Spirit."[451]

Nevin, in Good's estimation, misrepresented Calvin by suggesting that Christ is self-mediating, and that he imparts his humanity to us in the Supper. Yet Mercersburg did maintain the operation of the Holy Spirit in mediating Christ in the Supper. But the conflict was not purely imagined by Good and other detractors. Nevin, as well as Schaff, insisted on the partaking of the full nature of Christ in the Supper. In Nevin's strong emphasis of the imparting of Christ's humanity and the directness of Christ's own participation in the Supper less emphasis was given to the role of the Spirit. His intention was to resist what he believed was the infiltration of Baptist theology into the GRC which made everything hinge on the Holy Spirit such that the sacrament was merely the communing with Christ's spirit. In contrast Good argued that this so-called "Baptist" theory was really Zwingli's who, much more than Calvin, represented the proper source of sacramental theology in the GRC.[452]

Good contended that Nevin got off the true Reformed track with his confusing and erroneous idealist philosophy. Nevin wrongly applied his own doctrine of "objectivity" to the doctrines of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Good concluded that Nevin would make the sacraments in their objective sense quite nearly effective for salvation.[453]

[451] Good, History, p. 238.

[452] Good, History, p. 239. More will be said on the question of the Holy Spirit in the section on Calvin and Nevin.

[453] Good, History, p. 252.

The debate over whether Nevin got Calvin right or not has continued to the present. In Brian Gerrish's, "The Flesh of the Son of Man: John W. Nevin on the Church and the Eucharist," he finds in Nevin what Good suggests; an exclusive grace conferred by the Supper. He adds that in contrast Calvin would have denied that "anything less is offered in a sermon than is conferred through the sacrament." Yet here Nevin is mute. Says Gerrish, "He clung tenaciously to the notion that something happens in the Lord's Supper which occurs nowhere else." And while Nevin allowed that the eucharistic grace depended on the economy of salvation which is continuous and in some way prior to the eucharistic grace, nevertheless, as Nevin reminds his readers Schleiermacher clearly pointed out, Calvin taught that in the Supper we have the "real presence of Christ's body and blood to be had nowhere else."[454]

In a different emphasis the Roman Catholic scholar Nathan Mitchell has recently argued that in fact Nevin went far beyond the eucharistic doctrine of the Reformed tradition. But again, like Good, Mitchell contends that the significant departure is Nevin's nineteenth-century idealism which articulates an anthropology or psychology wherein the spiritual life of mankind is organically united to its material counterpart. However, Mitchell's description of Nevin's deviation from Calvin demonstrates only a difference in epistemologies. In spite of Nevin's clear departure from sixteenth-century philosophical categories, his final eucharistic doctrine provably differs from Calvin only in its ambitious attempt to secure the fact of real union with Christ as the unique grace of the Supper not offered anywhere else. For Mercersburg it is the "inward consciousness"

[454] Gerrish, "Flesh," p. 65.

of the human creature which is "lifted" to share in the person of Christ.[455]

In agreement with Gerrish, Mitchell recognizes in Nevin a unique grace which is nowhere else conferred to the believer. This Mitchell identifies as deriving from Nevin's growing catholicity, and he contrasts it with Calvin's position which holds that no "specific gift" is communicated to the believer at Eucharist which is not already available to the believer through faith.

While each of the authors seek to come to terms with the question of Nevin's faithfullness or lack of faithfulness to Calvin, we must remain fully aware of the polemic in which Nevin is engaged and which he believed required a new psychological perspective. Certainly the authors never leave us in doubt about Calvin's dilemma, where, in one example, Nevin has Calvin face Westphal on the question of the Supper. Here Calvin's battle over Christ's presence in the Eucharist is with Lutherans on the one hand, and Zwinglians on the other. In Nevin's reading of Calvin, Calvin seeks a third alternative, as does Melancthon. But neither must we be left in doubt that the confrontation serves the historical idea of furthering Nevin's perceived correction of the modern divisions between Romans, Lutherans, Reformed, Puritans and Baptists. That would miss an insight into Nevin's emerging concept of the real presence. That concept, like Calvin's and Melancthon's, included an attempt to mediate between disparate positions. And in Mercersburg's reading of Calvin the anticipated third concept must mediate these positions by incorporating them, yet going beyond them. To

[455] Mitchell, "Church," pp. 413-422. Yet for both Calvin and Nevin we are "lifted" to the "real" presence of Christ in the sense of the Sursum Corda as it may be expressed liturgically, theologically or psychologically.

some extent Mitchell has recognized this.[456]

Mitchell, like Good, begins with Mercersburg's idealism as informing Nevin's position on the Eucharist. The novelty of the organic law would culminate in a novel theory of the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, one that Mercersburg felt would transcend both the theory of local presence (Rome and Luther) and the comfortless doctrine of the "real absence" (Puritan and Baptist theology).[457]

A psychological application of the principle of real organic union wedded to the principle of the incarnation provided Mercersburg with their solution to Calvin's dilemma of explaining how Christ could be both seated at God's right hand, and present in the Eucharist. The incarnation allows Christ's full divinity and full humanity. Insofar as Christ is divine, his presence continues to be with God in heaven (the famous extra Calvinisticum). As Christ is human his presence is with his Church on earth and available to the believer in the Eucharist.

Mercersburg's reconsideration of the Reformed faith must be tied to their identification of the doctrines of Calvin, Melancthon, et. al., as essential aspects of Christianity's progress. It is in this tradition of the development of doctrine and not simply the repristination or modernizing of Reformed theology which characterizes their work on the sacraments.

[456] Nevin's idea of the debate between Calvin and Westphal was apparently so good, and sufficiently obscure, that it was lifted from his "Doctrine of the Reformed Church On the Lord's Supper," Mercersburg Review, 2 (1850), pp. 486-496, and used uncited by Alexander Barclay in his own The Protestant Doctrine of the Lord's Supper, A Study in the Eucharistic Teaching of Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin (Glasgow, 1927). But more, Barclay virtually copied without footnote Nevin's reply to Hodge (pp. 498-510) to compose his chapter 18, "Calvin's Doctrine of the Lord's Supper. Is It Candid and Consistent." This fact was reported in Clemmer, "Significance," p. 19 and repeated in Clemmer, "Transcendentalism," p. 598.

[457] Mitchell, "Church," p. 462.

This is precisely the thesis of Plummer. Pummer wrote that Nevin believed that the revival of the doctrine of the real presence among Protestants would lift Reformed theology to the high standards of the Reformation.[458] He writes:

> Nevin has taken what he holds to be the substance of the doctrine of the Lord's Supper as held by the Reformed Church of the sixteenth [sic] and reinterpreted it in the light of his concept of the organic unity of Christ's person, his nature as universal or generic in its humanity, his thesis that the essence of the body is the law of life, and his concept of the organic unity of the individual person. These concepts enable him to say that the whole of the theanthropic person of Christ in the form of the law of his life and death can pass over into the total life of the believer in the Lord's Supper, through the agency of the Holy Spirit, itself the spirit of Christ, without any corporal or material contact with the person of Christ.[459]

In this, says Plummer, Nevin felt he had reconciled the seemingly contradictory facts of Christ's real presence in the Eucharist and his presence in heaven at God's right hand. Furthermore, this modern psychological approach effectively harmonized for Mercersburg their christology with the mystical union of Christ with the believer and the mystery of the Holy Supper.

That Mercersburg's theological and psychological approach was dialectical, seeking a way through the modern objections to real union with Christ, is evident in Nevin's description of Calvin's approach which he considered equally dialectical. For Nevin, Calvin's theology develops in his mediating between warring parties. But Nevin also believed that Mercersburg's doctrine of the Lord's Supper, which ultimately found expression in the Order of Worship, faithfully represented the Reformed

[458] Plummer, "Theology," p. 239.

[459] Plummer, "Theology," p. 267.

position and was "in strict agreement with the Calvinistic or old Reformed doctrine." He also believed it spoke against the defectors from that doctrine.[460]

Schaff's work in liturgics leads us to suggest that he too saw Mercersburg in the role of mediating a third position, specifically between the Old Lutheran and the Reformed views. Although Schaff held to the same concept of the partaking of Christ's humanity, it is impossible to say how completely he applied the modern psychology. Nevertheless he was convinced that to be orthodox meant that one held to the real presence of Christ in the Supper. Only the mode of Christ's presence was to be disputed.[461]

In his Mystical Presence and his "Doctrine of the Lord's Supper," Nevin weaved a modern Reformed perspective out of the old Reformation controversy over the mode of Christ's presence in the Supper. The idealistic psychological transformation occurs in the terminology which makes everything hinge on the proper "idea" of the Supper. Thus he makes the contestants, notably Luther and Calvin, self-critical, in that now, unlike the sixteenth century, they attempt to understand scientifically the proper "concept" of the Supper. Here the realistic categories which were unmediated by critical reflection are transformed into a phenomenology of real union. No longer, for example, is the question of the physical substance, bread, a matter of the possibility of its substantiation. For Mercersburg, to do so is to abstract the problem, leaving the decision to empirical verification, for those of Zwingli's persuasion, or to blind faith, which, in their eyes, is Luther or Rome's persuasion. The idealistic approach allows an inward and outward force to all of life. The miracle of

[460] Nevin, "Dorner: First," p. 287.

[461] Schaff, Reunion, p. 13.

the Supper consists not in a disruption of physical laws, with the subsequent acceptance or rejection of that possibility, but the "real" experience that that which is at work inwardly in the believer is made to have a unique rapport with that which is at work, supernaturally, in the elements. The emphasis is on Christ who must make himself present in the elements themselves. That is forever a mystery.

Where Mercersburg is admittedly part of the Reformation tradition is in this necessary bit of rationalistic explanation, which expects some word of how common elements can contain the divinity and impute that divinity to the believer. Says Nevin, in this respect we remain, with the Reformers, somewhat rationalistic. Our tradition requires a reasonable explanation of the mysteries we enjoy. We simply cannot require blind acceptance.[462] In this, Mercersburg seeks to show how the Reformers themselves really emphasized the "transition" over the question of transmutation in their description of how we have Christ in the Supper. Naturally this argument was consistent with Mercersburg's approach to historiography, but perhaps today would be suspect in its lack of a clear statement of the end to which Mercersburg reads and applies the Reformers.[463]

BAPTISM

In contrast to their work on the Eucharist, Mercersburg had little to say on the question of Baptism. And a host of writers have pointed this out. However, no one has treated the subject exhaustively, although Nichols gave a chapter of his book to the general subject. As Nichols points out, Mercersburg's work on Baptism developed out of the various debates with other points of view. Most of these debates were started over Mercersburg's

[462] Nevin, Mystical, pp. 58-59.

[463] Nevin, Mystical, p. 73.

controversial emphasis of the objective Church. As with their views on the Supper, their emphasis on the existence and efficacy of the unique grace given in Baptism tweaked the ear of Princeton, certain Baptists and the forces of revival theology.

For Mercersburg, Princeton and the Baptists began with a faulty christology which did not recognize "the new world of grace" created by Christ, but a mechanical world in which heaven contrived a method for saving mankind. The grace of Baptism is just one more device to accomplish that superficial goal.[464]

Nevin acknowledged that in America Baptists had the popular support. And he attributed that not only to Baptist zeal in proselytizing, but to the lack of enthusiasm on the part of the orthodox.

Baptist theology had flourished in the frontier vision of individual freedom and self-determination, confusing independence with the organ of right faith. Baptism for Baptists serves this conception where the sacrament merely marks the individual's own accomplishment. In the individual's assent to Christ through right thinking and moral correctness, he win's righteousness while the sacrament is made to be powerless and without effect for sanctification.[465]

In contrast, says Nevin, Chrysostom saw in Baptism a regenerative power able to elevate the individual into a new order of existence, a "heavenly life." There all aspects of life share in the sacramental grace such that no matter the age of the individual the new life of Christ

[464] John W. Nevin, "Sartorius on the Person and Work of Christ," Mercersburg Review, 1 (1849), pp. 160-161.

[465] John W. Nevin, "Noel On Baptism," Mercersburg Review, 2 (1950), p. 239.

permeats every aspect of the individual's own life. Thus the seminal quality of Baptism rests in its organic structure which is able to bring the believer into union with the means of salvation within the churchly sphere of grace. Nevin contrasts this with the Baptist theory where Baptism becomes a crowning ceremony for one who, by his own merit, has won salvation.

Certainly Princeton and other more traditionally Calvinistic Protestant theologians and divines could not be said to share this view with Baptists. Rather, it was Mercersburg who moved the question to the radical position of the objective force of the baptismal grace. The more traditional theologians all allowed that the emphasis should not be on the individual, but on the corporate or covenant community. It was Nevin, for example, who, in the case of Horace Bushnell, emphasized, in contrast to Bushnell's idea of Christian nurture, the objective transference of the individual by God into an objective sphere of grace. And it was precisely this criticism which the influential student of Mercersburg theology, Emanuel Gerhart levelled against Bushnell for whom,

> The covenant is a promise, rather than a spiritual reality; and Baptism a token, the seal of a promise, rather than a sacrament, the medium of divine power.[466]

Schaff, like Nevin, chose to understand the grace of the Baptism from the churchly perspective. Yet it was his job to point out the historical problem of Baptism in the Reformed system. His solution was to identify with what he considered were the less complicated views of Lutherans and

[466] Emanuel V. Gerhart, rev. of Christian Nurture, by Horace Bushnell, Mercersburg Review, 13 (1861), p. 494.

Anglicans. Calvin's dilemma was his commitment to a predestinarian focus. Unlike Augustine, whose churchly commitment led him to accept the effectiveness of Baptism for regeneration in spite of an understanding of predestination which should have rejected the doctrine that the Baptised are elect, Calvin made the effectiveness of baptismal grace dependent on election. Likewise, says Schaff, today, "The Calvinistic and Puritan system sacrifices the virtue of the sacrament to the election." Schaff himself preferred to accept the mystery of regenerative baptismal grace as a churchly reality whose confusion stems from human ignorance and not from the soteriological system itself.[467]

Mercersburg supported Baptism for infants. The organic model provided an obvious connection between Christ and every moment and aspect of an individual Christian's life. And while they acknowledged the absence of clear-cut Scriptural proof, they argued that such proof is clearly given in the "spirit of the bible." Schaff wrote:

> The strongest ground in favor of infant baptism, in connexion [sic] with and as a part of a well ordered Christian church . . . lies in the universality of the very idea of Christ, which includes humanity itself.[468]

Yet Schaff is cautious. He regards faith as essential for salvation. And he acknowledges that the Baptist theory proceeds from the fact that an infant cannot express his personal faith. But he says, Baptism was always considered part of the regenerative process, not the condition which

[467] Philip Schaff, "The Genius and Theology of St. Augustine," Mercersburg Review, 14 (1867), pp. 117-120.

[468] Philip Schaff, "Infant Baptism," trans., Mercersburg Review, 4 (1852), p. 389.

produced regerneration. Nor was regeneration required of the novice seeking Christian teaching. Baptism was part of the process by which a soul became a member of Christ's Church. Baptists have invented a new system by making spiritual maturity a condition of Baptism. The early church had no concept of Baptism as a subjective act or awakening of consciousness to the person of Christ. Rather, the Church has always taught that the effectiveness of Baptism was grounded in the divine act or objective aspect of the sacrament itself.[469]

DOCTRINE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The sacramental controversy included the criticism that in Mercersburg's emphasis of the importance of the impartation of the humanity of Christ to the believer in the Eucharistic feast, they ignored the role of the Holy Spirit in conveying the grace of the sacrament. However, their emphasis was not meant to cast a shadow on the work of the Spirit, but to recover the full person of Christ for the Protestant Eucharistic celebration. They believed the Puritans had spiritualized the feast into a memorial celebration where the only divine person present was the Holy Spirit. The effect of their emphasis on Christ was the perception on the part of many that they had minimized the role of the Spirit.

Certainly Nevin knew the nature of his contention. But he may have been addressing what he considered was an improper exaggeration of the Spirit's role in Puritan thinking. Nevertheless, Mercersburg's system suffers from a less than adequate consideration of the Holy Spirit.

Nathan Mitchell appropriately sees the source of this in Mercersburg's idealistic anthropology as it connects with Nevin's christological concept of the second Adam. With German Idealism the important correction of the

[469] Schaff, "Infant," pp. 390-395.

traditional theological systems was their "false" dualism, that is a dualism which treats the body and the soul mechanically as ontologically distinct and disunited parts of a human being. Mercersburg's organic concept united the two, and dealt with the human predicament as the predicament characterized in the fallen Adam. As mankind shares Adam's predicament he needs salvation not only of his fallen soul, but also of his fallen body. It is the unity of each which requires the salvation of a mediator whose organic union with the believer shares the human nature which will establish the human connection, yet also shares the divine nature which will establish the union with God. Thus, as with Schleiermacher, Christ, as the second undefiled Adam, is the "universal man," who constitutes ideal humanity.[470]

While the Holy Spirit is a distinct person within the Trinity, his work is never given independent status. His work is to mediate Christ's real presence to the believers *as* "mode and medium" of that presence.[471] As Mitchell points out, Mercersburg's doctrine of the unity of Christ and the Holy Spirit leaves them undistinguished as to person with the Spirit simply acting as a mode of Christ's presence. Yet on the other hand, Mitchell does allow that Mercersburg's idealism allows both the unity of the idea and the object and their distinctiveness thus retaining the real difference between Christ and the Spirit.[472]

The source of Mercersburg's thinking on the role of the Holy Spirit may have again been Schelling. Penzel has describe how in Schelling's thirty-sixth lecture, the insistence is that Christianity is subject to the

[470] Mitchell, "Church," p. 425.

[471] Mitchell, "Church," p. 428.

[472] Mitchell, "Church," p. 430.

natural laws of historical development. Yet the principal foundation of development is the person of Jesus Christ, while the foundation's sustainer and perfector is the post-ascension spirit of Christ. Here the domination of the idea of Christ over all earthly phenomena is evident as well as the Spirit's subordination to the work of mediating Christ. Again we are left with no distinct role or person of the Holy Spirit.

This problem becomes even more evident as we find Nevin suggesting that even the pre-incarnation Spirit served to mediate Christ. Not Christ as Jesus of Nazareth, but the Christ who is the eternal word of God (the logos incarnandus).[473]

Clearly the principle of organic union has this disadvantage. The union between God and man established in Christ is a union between personalities mediated by consciousness. Such an immediate union vitiates the idea of a person as mediator such as the Holy Spirit. Nor is it possible to identify the Spirit with consciousness (or the mind of God) and still retain the Spirit as an individual personality. So the weakness in Mercersburg's doctrine of the Holy Spirit is both theological and one which logically follows from a philosophical pre-condition built into Mercersburg's idealistic philosophy.

DOCTRINE OF THE MINISTRY

The confusion which led to controversy was a confusion over Mercersburg's churchly stand. Many perceived it as a departure from Reformed ecclesiology. Indeed, Nichols believes that Mercersburg's most drastic deviation from Reformed tradition is in its doctrine of the ministry.

[473] Nevin, "The Spirit of Prophesy," Mercersburg Review, 24 (1877), pp. 181-212.

The American experience of disestablishment made it no longer as necessary to insist on the unity and visibility of the Church. Rather the American denominations demonstrated an ambivalent "political conservatism" whose visibility sought only to "maintain an aristocracy of status." In contrast Mercersburg, along with other nineteenth-century high-church movements, sought to maintain the tie between the "Church militant" and a politically active clergy. (Nichols presents the interesting thesis that one way of looking at Mercersburg is "as a reaction against Jacksonian democracy.")[474]

In a clear departure from Reformation tradition, Mercersburg identified ministerial authority directly with the Apostles. That departure is Mercersburg's reconsideration of the Roman doctrine of apostolic succession. Says Nichols, Nevin maintained an unbroken line of succession which "extended from the apostles to his day as a self-perpetuating corporation within the church." Such a succession was both "fact" and "requirement." And Nevin's only qualification of that in regard to the Protestant Reformation was his contention that the Reformed ministry which descends to the minister from Christ comes "through" the apostate Church of Rome, but not "from" the apostate Church of Rome. Yet in spite of this qualification Nichols concludes that Nevin

> assumed something that the Reformers would have found preposterous - that the Roman mass priest was by preparation or the intention of his ordination equipped to be a minister of the Word and Sacraments. Nevin gave no sign of being even aware of the Reformation doctrine of the ministry.[475]

[474] Nichols, Romanticism, pp. 259-260.

[475] Nichols, Romanticism, pp. 265-266. Nevin's distinction from the traditional Reformed position seeks to explain how apostolic authority can descend through the offices of the Church in spite of Rome's corruption. But he is also seeking to explain it currently, in spite of Protestant sectarianism.

Nevin's radical views included an "association of institutional genealogy with the validity or efficaciousness of ministerial functions."[476]

Whether Schaff followed Nevin in the radical nature of his break with Reformed theology is questionable. Little is available by Schaff to enlighten us. However, he did insist with Calvin that without the spirit of Christ the succession is empty. Nichols concludes that Schaff maintained Calvin's position of a positive break theologically and religiously in the apostolic succession of Rome on the one hand, and the valid uninterrupted historical succession of Rome on the other.[477] In contrast, Nevin would find in the historical succession a real and vital succession of ministerial or priestly authority not descending from Rome, but descending through the uninterrupted presence of Christ with his historical and visibly institutional Church.

Nevin's statement of the divine power held by ministers which comes from Christ through the apostolical succession is recorded in Nevin's letter to Harbaugh and in other places.[478] Yet Nevin's interesting criticism on this question of the reigning theology of John Dick demonstrates that once again Nevin's sympathy with Rome develops in part from his problem with the "unsatisfactory" Calvinistic christology maintained by the Scottish Reformed tradition.

Nevin deviated from his discussion of the priestly office of Christ to comment on Dick's deficiency. In Dick's conclusion he asserts that Christ alone intercedes on behalf of mankind. He condemns Rome for their concept

[476] Nichols, Romanticism, p. 266.

[477] Nichols, Romanticism, p. 268.

[478] Nevin, "Letter," p. 3.

of the priesthood and makes no mention of the priestly office of the minister.[479] Nevin, in contrast, begins his account of the priestly office by expanding it to include the minister of the word, and then again to include all members of Christ's Church. He recognizes certain abuses by Rome. Yet he will not devalue the concept. For him the absence of an understanding of the priestly office of the minister in Protestantism is a great defect. That defect may be traced to an improper understanding of Christ's work of intercession. He concludes,

> The abstract Calvinistic view, as represented by Dr. Dick, that the intercession and the sacrifice were made only for the elect, is unsatisfactory.[480]

Such a view misunderstands the intercession of Christ by failing to recognize that the method of Christ's intercession for the world included the establishment on earth of a new universal order of grace, which proceeds from the institutional Church. The Church has an historical integrity and constitution which has come down from the apostles. Its earthly life and offices contain and continue that original integrity and constitution in its ongoing experience.

LITURGY

The Church's historical life and ministry expresses itself in liturgical forms. These forms are especially significant among the high-church movements. Indeed most of the recent study and interest in Mercersburg is on the subject of liturgy. We have mentioned Mitchell's dissertation, and there is also the published dissertation by Jack M.

[479] Dick, Lectures, Vol. II, pp. 88-91.

[480] Erb, Nevin's Classroom Lectures, pp. 256-262.

Maxwell, Worship and Reformed Theology: The Liturgical Lessons of Mercersburg. A more recent work on the subject is Gregg A. Mast's, "The Eucharistic Service of the Catholic Apostolic Church and Its Influence On Reformed Liturgical Renewals of the Nineteenth Century." In view of these recent studies we will limit ourselves to a brief consideration of this aspect of the Mercersburg system, keeping in mind its crucial importance for the system as a whole and the enormous work done both by Mercersburg and by later writers, on Mercersburg as a liturgical movement.

The crowning theological aspect of Mercersburg's liturgical theory is that, unlike other theories of worship scientific theological reflection must precede theological expression in worship. Traditional forms of liturgical expression must be critically re-evaluated to discover their consistency with the theological or confessional position of the Church. Thus the art of worship begins with theological reflection.

Considering Mercersburg's emphasis of the inward principle which must follow with its corresponding outward principle, it should come as no surprise that Mercersburg begins with reflection or with the "idea" of worship. Yet proper theological reflection must move to the objectivizing force of liturgical expression. Just as the private or subjective experience of Christ must become objective, so also must the Church's corporate experience become universal and constant in liturgical forms.

Naturally Mercersburg's position clashed with a growing tendency in the GRC toward free worship. Yet with the consistency deriving from their system Mercersburg sought to move the GRC from individualistic expressions of worship toward established forms of worship where a corporate experience is emphasized. (The controversy this aroused is given further consideration

in the section on the liturgical controversy.)

For Nevin the growing "Puritan" tendency among the GRC as well as American Protestant orthodoxy in general, made Christ an object of thought rather than faith. The miracle of the objective manifestation of the supernatural is emasculated and

> resolved into a spiritualistic presence, seated in the Holy Ghost, and made to reach into the minds of men directly from heaven, in no organic conjunction whatever with the Incarnation.[481]

In response Mercersburg raises the liturgical banner. It is nothing other than a full scale war with liturgy as the rallying point. Not that the cause is "ritualism" or mere symbolism, but an all out conflict of theological systems striking on all fronts "far beyond the German Reformed Church into the life of the entire Evangelical Protestantism of this land."[482] The zeal and expertise they demonstrated brought remarkable and lasting results considering their unique experiment among the German Reformed. While the liturgy which finally came from the committee had difficulty gaining acceptance, its influence remains strong in the United Church of Christ and among those "Mercersburg churches" who still worship with the Liturgy of 1857 convinced that this order represents the highest liturgical achievement in Reformed history.

THE SUPERNATURAL VERSUS THE NATURAL

Our concluding two sections represent a transition between the system and the religious discourse to be considered in the next chapter.

To a limited extent the philosophic task which Mercersburg's system

[481] Nevin, "New Liturgy," p. 51.

[482] Nevin, "New Liturgy," p. 53.

took upon itself was the establishing of the reasonability of religious claims in an age of rationalistic doubt. The concept or metaphor chosen had a phenomenological and historical character. Organic union provided the evidence of the rational link between the natural and the supernatural worlds, a link established in Christ and mediated by reason. Such a union provided, to Mercersburg's satisfaction, reasonable grounds for belief and ultimately participation in an invisible world beyond the senses.

However, in America, Scottish common sense philosophy, with its reactionary and empirical base, had effectively influenced the American Calvinistic tradition by giving it what was thought to be sensible and scientific support for religious claims. Common sense supported a rationalistic psychology which identified in men and women a mental faculty which, while it could deduce the creator's hand in creation, neither sought nor expected rapport with that creator in immediate mystical experience.

Thus resistance to Mercersburg's claims by certain members of America's religious establishment centered, in part, in resistance to Mercersburg's unique reply to rationalism and to its Protestant advocates who would reject the existence of, or at least immediate access to, the supernatural world. That is, Mercersburg believed that the influence of rationalism, especially in the popular form of common sense realism, had made the acceptance of real participation in the supernatural world of grace brought by Christ and sustained by him in the Church nearly impossible. Belief in "heaven" had become, in Mercersburg's eyes, belief in a meaningless and abstract make believe land concocted from biblical citations.

Therefore, Mercersburg felt it necessary to claim the right of Christians in America to once again be supernaturalists. The confusion and

the resistance over this appeal created controversy, which spilled over into polemical discourse, in which Mercersburg defended itself by seeking historically to repair the post-Reformation imbalance which listed towards rationalism. Their method was to endorse a theological system and a theory of history which stressed the material principle of the living presence of Christ and a corresponding faith which not only justifies but assures, over against the dominant, choking formal principle which stressed an array of objects of salvation's mediation, in the case of the majority of the American denominations, or, in the case of skeptics, turned its back altogether on the unseen, preferring instead the purely material.

Nevin had specifically claimed this "general right of Christianity to be regarded as a strictly supernatural system of religion . . . " in his commencement address of 1867. Nevin had become convinced that all of the modern denominations, including Rome, had been influenced by some form of rationalism. Only churchly evangelicalism remained uncompromised in America, where the battle to assert the right to be supernaturalists would be fought.[483]

German Idealism represented the intellectual ground upon which a supernatural theology could be defended. Criticism arose in the perceived threat of philosophy to America's theological tradition. But Mercersburg had no intention of replacing evangelical theology with philosophy, as some believed, but of promoting philosophy as an apologetic support of Christian culture in general.

Mercersburg asked that philosophy be allowed to do its job, which was to reveal the "interior fundamental form of the world's life . . . . " Once

[483] Nevin, "Commencement," p. 498.

philosophy recognized itself as the developing consciousness of the world, effective means could be applied to bring philosophy in line, so that humanity could be finally transformed into the supernatural "full image of God."[484]

Nevin understood American orthodox common sense philosophy to be no philosophy at all. It had no power to understand itself, but served only to confirm traditional concepts. Thus American Christianity was, for him, unphilosophical. And while "an unphilosophical Christianity may be sufficient to save a multitude of individual souls for heaven . . . it can never conquer the world."[485]

Nevin's assessment of the practical common sense philosophy was that it put all of its weight on the "outward" consciousness. In its practitioner's zeal for practical and useful solutions, it forgot the essential role of "profound thought" which claims to be "philosophy itself." This affection had become influential in its claim to "measure all things . . . by the categories of the common abstract understanding, as it stands related to the world of time and sense."[486]

As far as Nevin was concerned Kant had already corrected this particular misdirection of philosophy which had started with Locke and later with Hume. Yet in America it was this very "false and helpless system of thinking" which dominated "our whole life." Its tendency was materialistic and anarchistic, and it was given to self-deception by claiming the "spiritual and the supernatural" within its own "province."

[484] Nevin, "Freedom," p. 40.

[485] Nevin, "Freedom," p. 40.

[486] Nevin, "Freedom," p. 42.

But Nevin held that such claims are only a facade. Common sense philosophy "has no power to reach the spiritual and supernatural . . . ." It merely pretends to argue "proofs" or the doctrines of Christianity, with the tenets of empirical science, thereby reducing the reality of the invisible world to "mere abstraction." And the very heart of this system, which dominates American orthodoxy, is nothing other than the common sense based realism, which relies on "experience" for its raison d'etre.[487]

In contrast German Idealism had provided Mercersburg with a comprehensive modern philosophic ground. As American culture became conscious of philosophy as the spirit of its intellectual development it could appropriate for itself a theological system consistent with its own nature and its ultimate end. Mercersburg believed this system to be churchly evangelicalism. Only churchly evangelicalism had effectively understood the principle of the incarnation as not only a cultural principle, but as an "actual" supernatural existence in the world. Rationalism's influence had subverted orthodoxy by teaching it to mimic the reality of the effect of the incarnation in the world without allowing it any real application. For Nevin, this confusion, this settling for a mental acquiescence to the principle, had created such a situation, "that the very elect are in continual danger of being deceived by it to the loss of their own steadfastness."[488] The direct conflict with Nevin's former Princetonian Presbyterianism pitted two systems, both evangelical, against each other over this very issue of the supernatural. The slow but growing influence of rationalism in American Presbyterian orthodoxy encouraged an

[487] Nevin, "Freedom," p. 44.

[488] Nevin, "Commencement," p. 501.

empirical approach which placed enough weight on the necessity of external proofs for the claims of religion that it made the internal proofs, which are ultimately all that a supernatural system may claim for itself, appear primarily subjective and sentimental.

Nevin reveals this conflict in his criticism of Dick's handling of biblical interpretation. For Dick the external proof weighs most critically and is treated as completely distinct from the personal expressions of the biblical writers. The proof of the divine and miraculous inspiration of the Gospel comes in the form of an argument that ignorant fishermen could not have written such profound books. Thus they must have been in inspired rapture at the time of writing their testaments.[489]

Nevin rejects any notion of trances or divine dictation, and he asserts the freedom and individuality of the Gospel writers. A supernatural system finds conviction only in the internal evidence which agrees with its origin. The Apostles' words and thoughts were entirely their own. Yet the writer's thoughts flowed from "his inward life" which in Christ had come under subjection to a "higher authority."[490]

Nevin carries his critique to the enlightened New England theology of Bushnell. His own review of Bushnell's system allows its clear superiority over revivalistic theology. But again, unlike churchly evangelicalism, Bushnell's supernaturalism does not sufficiently allow the supernatural an ordinary presence in the natural. The result is the forced distinction between the natural and the supernatural whereby the Church is treated in low esteem (by Mercersburg's standards) and the supernatural has no power

[489] Dick, Lectures, pp. 110-122.

[490] Erb, Nevin's Classroom Lectures, pp. 43-53.

to enter the world.[491]

Interestingly, both agree that their current rationalistic age has lost sight of the "supernaturalistic truth of Christianity." They both concur that that truth is contained in the central person of Jesus Christ as he objectifies the supernatural in history. And both credit Schleiermacher for recovering the centrality of Christ. But for Bushnell, says Nevin, the influence of Christ remains a deus ex machina, since he offers no way by which nature is organically linked to the supernatural in the person of Christ. For Bushnell, his understanding of the natural and the supernatural bifurcates reality into two separate and unrelated economies.[492]

Nevin responds, the supernatural cannot be understood as a "transient phenomenon." It is not an irregular appearance of the unnatural in the natural, "no theophany only in the Old Testament style." Rather, the supernatural is organically linked to our capacity for faith. The supernatural

> must then be supremely natural, as well as overwhelmingly supernatural; no product of nature plainly, and yet in such harmony with it, that it shall seem to be at the same time its full outbursting glory and necessary perfection.[493]

Presumably, Bushnell saw nature as a flow of physical events in a succession of cause and effect. He saw the supernatural as outside that chain of events. And while Nevin has no objection to this analogy as such,

[491] John W. Nevin, "Natural and Supernatural," rev. of Natural and the Supernatural, as together consisting the one system of God, by Horace Bushnell, Mercersburg Review, 11 (1859), pp. 176-177.

[492] Nevin, "Natural," pp. 188-189.

[493] Nevin, "Natural," p. 189.

he believes it effectively brings the workings of the supernatural under the control of the natural.

Furthermore, Bushnell places the moral sphere, or the sphere of mind, outside of nature's causal nexus and within the supernatural. Thus the supernatural is understood as having a transcendent place in the natural without being confused with it.

To refute Bushnell's dualism, Nevin, showing his distinctiveness from Hegel, argues for a type of dualism which is pre-Cartesian, in what he calls the traditional sense of theology. Here the natural is defined much more broadly than in terms of the material or physical. Nevin says that ancient theology included the moral world within the natural order (his rejection of Kant). And while the moral world is distinct, it remains part of the natural economy and needs the supernatural to lift it to a higher order of existence.

The further effect of Bushnell's rationalism, says Nevin, is that it sees sin as necessary for moral development. That in turn makes sanctif ation a process which occurs within the state of nature. Like Calvin and Hegel, Bushnell is therefore forced to adopt

> a Manichean notion of sin on the one hand, and as the necessary counterpart of this, a Gnostic concept of redemption on the other.[494]

Says Nevin, in fact sin was not a necessity of our moral development which, when threatened, made the incarnation necessary. Christ was our future. Yet sin required the incarnation. Thus the incarnation is a supernatural a-priori to the question of sin and salvation. And

[494] Nevin, "Natural," p. 200.

sanctification must be understood within the supernatural economy objectified by the Church. It is within the real world of grace that the language of the fall and sin make sense. To apply the categories abstractly as Calvin did, and as New England has, nature is overlooked and sanctification becomes a theoretical fiction easily pierced by critical rationalists. Nevin concludes, it is little wonder that Bushnell's churchly tendencies are merely moral and sociological, and why his work lacks a profound knowledge of Church history.[495]

It appears that the originator of Mercersburg's crusade to refute rationalism by means of the supernatural was Frederick Rauch. Says Nevin, it was Rauch's dream to replace the "unscientific systems, commonly current in this country:" systems directly influenced by English "moral philosophy." Rauch believed these systems were inspired by "rationalism" and "new thinking." None of them rested in knowledge which expressed itself in "a form of life." The reality of faith reaches us where the supernatural expresses itself as "the very power and presence of the things themselves." For Rauch, Nevin writes,

> The invisible was felt to be the truly actual and real, while the outward and visible might be regarded as being in some sort only its empty shadow projected on the field of space.[496]

Philosophically and theologically Nevin took Rauch's influence in his

[495] Nevin, "Natural," pp. 205-210. Nevin's placing Romans in the same rationalistic boat with virtually everyone else raised Brownson's ire and provoked an article in his journal in which he affirmed Rome's maintenance of a supernatural order of existence in, "Natural and Supernatural," Brownson's Quarterly Review, 1 (New Series), 1847, pp. 100-115. It was followed by another article rejecting Bushnell's ideas in "Bushnellism: Or Orthodoxy and Heresy Identical," Brownson's Quarterly Review, 3 (New Series), 1849, pp. 495f.

[496] Nevin, "Eulogy (1859), p. 463. This raises again the question of the degree of Rauch's Hegelian idealistic materialism.

own direction. The supernatural world was the destination and proper end of human life. He believed the recognition of this by each individual human being was absolutely necessary that his life not be lived in vain. Yet human nature has its home in both the natural and the supernatural world. One's human nature must be "sublimated" in its natural attachment to nature. By so doing the individual is able to transcend himself and pass on to a higher "economy." In true Hegelian fashion this trancendence implies a process of sublation whereby the experience of the world of nature is taken up into the world of mind, which is no more than the subjection of experience to the higher experience of the "claims and purposes" of the various economies of nature. In this sense transcendence is no transcendence of nature itself, but of the various orders within the visible world (Hegel's limit). This, says Nevin, is merely the intellectualization of the world, and it remains incomplete.[497]

Hegel's limit results from the real difference between mind and nature. Transcendence to the supernatural cannot be effected by mind comprehending nature or itself. The mind must begin with the actual existence of the supernatural in distinction from nature. That comprehension is possible by means of the capacity for faith, which is able to perceive the supernatural world.

However, Nevin concludes, the chance of the religious media grasping this is remote. The age is at war with the Gospel since it is dominated by a rationalism devoid of the recognition of the supernatural.[498]

[497] John W. Nevin, "Man's True Destiny," Baccalaureate Address, Franklin and Marshall College, Lancaster. Pa., Mercersburg Review, 5 (1853), pp. 493-494.

[498] Nevin, "Destiny," pp. 494-511.

Nevin believed that Protestant orthodoxy's rejection of the real existence of the supernatural had led to the heretical and historically reoccurring idea of the salvific act being applied to a natural economy. It is, says Nevin, nothing other than a return to the ancient Jewish Messianic "error."

Nevin insists that the subjection of all things to the new economy of grace, which is the supernatural effect of the atoning act, is not a natural phenomenon. Such thinking understands the kingdom of heaven as merely the continuation and fulfillment of the proper order of this world. It is merely the expectation that what this world is meant to be is seeking to actualize itself and, while it may be that a full actualization is far off, steps can be taken to achieve some approximation of that dream. Christianity must align itself with those most noble ideals for human kind and the means to achieve those ends. In that way at least a preparation for the kingdom of heaven can be made. Nevin laments

> Such is the humanitarian evangel, which in one form or another has come to prevail so widely especially in our own time, thrusting itself into the place of the true gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.[499]

The effect of this is the identification of the interests of the Gospel with its suitability to the interests of humanity's estate as it develops into the kingdom of heaven. Nature's order is conceived as a process which comes to completion in the order of grace, i.e., "to bring matter into subjection to mind through science and art . . . ." Ultimately the subjection of all things is not supernatural at all, but natural. Material interest become spiritual interests. Profit and success become

[499] Nevin, "Jesus," p. 183.

godliness. Political and commercial triumphs are confused with the triumphs of Christianity. The cause becomes identified with the intangible hope. And the battle for individual rights and freedom becomes synonymous with the plan of redemption. But, cautions Nevin,

> The kingdom of heaven is no mere continuation or carrying forward of the order of this life, whether physical or ethical; it is constitutionally different from this; and is to be reached and possessed only as the whole system of things seen and temporal is superseded at last, through death and resurrection, by things unseen and eternal.[500]

The kingdom of heaven reaches us through the "power" of faith. It is a system whose source proceeds from the supernatural world and through the faculty of faith is "carried forward in the present world, in its course of preparation for the world to come . . . . " Nevin concludes: that system and agencies is the person of Christ himself, as he comes to us through the spiritual organization of the Church in the world.[501]

CRITIQUE OF THE FORMAL PRINCIPLE BY MEANS OF THE MATERIAL PRINCIPLE

In effect, Mercersburg argued that the incipient rationalism which infected and thus influenced American Puritan theology and Protestant orthodoxy in general, made a correct understanding of the supernatural impossible. By its very nature, which in its emphasis of freedom confused the way by which the individual may approach the divine, the Puritan system was "subjective." It established individual experience as the proper means for the apprehension of the supernatural. It defended this approach by insisting that God speaks directly to the souls of individuals.

[500] Nevin, "Jesus," p. 184.

[501] Nevin, "Jesus," pp. 188-189.

In direct contrast to this system, and in an attempt to correct it, Mercersburg pleaded the case of churchly evangelicalism as the positive corrective to the direction of American Protestant orthodoxy. In opposition to an idea of the God who speaks directly to the souls of men, Mercersburg argued that revelation is decidedly historical. His contact with people is not a private experience. Rather, by the moving of the Holy Spirit, what God has objectively already done in human history can be recognized by the soul whose experience of the incarnation has made possible the fuller recognition of the Gospel of revelation. As such the word becomes the power which, living in the souls of people, saves them from death.[502]

The person of Jesus as the revelation of God (not as an oracle but as the incarnation of God's own being) is objective in his historical location and his continuing effect upon the world's life as people respond to him in faith. While Christ's divine life and the believer's response to that life in faith exists in the supernatural world, static and constant principles of objectivity and subjectivity control that experience. If these principles become imbalanced by ignoring or stressing too strongly one of the principles, the relationship between Christ and the believer is jeopardized. It was Mercersburg's contention that the post-Reformation historical forces led to an excessive stressing of the formal or subjective principle. As a corrective to that imbalance they, following the lead of the Mediating school in Germany, promoted the material principle.

The defining of the principles themselves is difficult. As is often the case with German Idealism, terms depend on their context. Depending on

[502] Nevin, "New Liturgy," p. 39.

that context, which may be at times philosophical and at other times historical, the material or objective principle may seem to have a subjective character. The same is true of the formal or subjective principle. Perhaps the best way to approach this problem is not to dispute the particular use made of the principles in their contexts, but rather to understand the method used to apply those principles in the system itself, and then judge the merit and wisdom of the system as a whole.

A further difficulty is that in the dialectical nature of the Mercersburg system each of the principles themselves has poles of objective and subjective status. Thus the material principle has an objective and a subjective side. The effect is to say that the "objective" principle is both objective and subjective. However, generally speaking, when Mercersburg refers to the material principle they mean the material principle of the Reformation. That principle is justification by faith. Yet at other times Mercersburg is referring to the material principle of Christianity itself which is that the person of Jesus Christ is the center and essence of the Christian religion. That is, the first principle of the Christian faith is Christ: the incarnate God crucified, buried and risen, who saves us by his birth, life, sacrifice, resurrection and ascension.

The material principle's objective character stems from the historical person of Christ. Its subjective character stems from the indwelling godhead of Christ and the new supernatural economy which proceeded from his life, death and resurrection.

Generally speaking, the second principle of Protestantism is the formal or subjective principle. That principle is the normative quality of Scripture.

The material and formal principles contain the poles of objective and

subjective qualities. These poles include the dialectic of divine and human, law and freedom, corporate and personal, etc. The objective side of the material principle is the historical Jesus, while the subjective side is the divine logos. The objective side of the formal principle is the written word, while the subjective side is the indwelling word. The material principle is controlled by the subjective pole, while the formal principle is controlled by the objective pole.

To complicate matters, the different ages in the history of the Faith brought with them their own manifestation of the eternal principles. They were all prefigured in Christ and took shape early on in the apostles Peter, James and John. Peter's encounter with Christ left him representative of Christ's authority. James' premature death left to Paul the response to Christ which frees the believer from the authoritative curse of the law. And John's relationship with Christ left him to always reconcile authority and freedom in love until the final dawning of the age of love in the Kingdom of Heaven.

The prefigurement of the principles of the Christian religion in personalities led to their 'natural' manifestation in historical epochs. Christ as first principle led to a divine Church whose perfect dialectical balance included the inward life of Christ as well as his outward authority in an institutional structure. Major problems developed for the Church when it began to place too much stress on outward authority by involving itself in the control of secular historical forces. At the same time it neglected the inward, subjective question of personal faith and piety. In reaction there developed an historical movement which sought the recovery of the inward principle of faith and minimized the outward. Its method was to recover the material principle by means of laying stress on the side of the

principle being ignored, in hopes that the balance be recovered. Thus it imposed a new principle, or Protestant principle, on the institutional church. This was a subjective principle in character which was meant to offset the dominant principle of outward authority. At the same time the Reformation imposed a new formal principle: "the supremacy of the Scriptures over tradition."[503]

Again, the dialectic created new expressions of the principles of Christianity, this time for Protestant Christians. The material principle of the Protestant Reformation included the personal role of the individual in the justifying act of faith. The formal principle placed the source of outward authority on the word of God.[504]

Progress lay in the mediation made by the spirit of St. John between the two epochs. Yet Protestantism is not the final stage. While Protestants desperately sought the perfect balance of the first principle of Christianity by recovering Christ, they themselves lost the balance between the material and the formal principles. Justification by faith led to excessive freedom and a sectarian disposition. And the authority of Scripture led to a rigid biblicism in which the word of God was reduced to a literal rendering of the canon. On the one hand freedom became synonymous with the Christian faith. On the other hand biblical legalism was made to be the mark of a true Christian.

In both cases the imbalanced principles led to an emphasis of the subjective character of the Christian faith. Outward authority was falsely established in reason, in episcopacy, in biblicism, etc. Each division of Christendom sought to claim authority for itself by establishing its

[503] Schaff, "Modern," p. 16.

[504] Schaff, "Was wir wollen," p. 4.

objectivity based on its experience of faith. Yet since none were first established in the material principle, each attempt to give outward force to their inward convictions merely became the shadow of their subjective experience. For Anglicans it was the illusion of a true apostolic heritage. For Lutherans and Reformed it became theological dogma or the decrees of God. For the Romans it became the mania of ultramontanism. For Puritans it was spiritism in the excessive emphasis of personal piety or the euphoria of revivalistic conversion. But the binding characteristic of them all was that at times the search for outward justification led to traditionalists movements (the appeal to the good old days) and at other times it embraced secular rationalism (the appeal to human reason).

It came to Mercersburg in America, developing from the influence of the Mediating school, to seek Protestantism's recovery of the material principle by reminding American Protestants of the centrality of the living person of Christ as a supernatural presence in the world. In so doing they tended to stress the outward authority of the Church's tradition as a legitimate corrective to an inflated formal principle. In this they re-established the institutional church as the only place where faith encounters the God of its justification.

Ryan has described the concept and process of this synthesis writing:

> The solution lay in the balanced reconciliation of the principles of authority and freedom, of the objective and the subjective, of the general and the particular. The result of the reconciliation would be a synthesis that would retain the values present in the heteronomous authority represented by the official Church and the personal apprehension of truth brought about through individual experience.[505]

[505] Ryan, "Nevin," p. 299. The same point was made earlier by Richards in "Mercersburg Considered," p. 141.

Dorner supplied Nevin with the historical outline which made recovery of the material principle paramount. The Roman church's authoritative structure had squashed Pauline freedom. It had suffocated the Gospel, and thus covered the Truth, because it could not resolve the impasse of a structurally dualistic system unable and unwilling to resolve the basic dialectical poles into comprehensive systems of reconciliation. The Roman church continued to hold opposed "the Divine and the human, the objective and the subjective, the general and the individual, the principle of authority and the principle of freedom" without offering the means to mediate these oppositions in a reconciling theology. Nevin writes:

> The result of this was in the end a general demoralization of the intellectual consciousness of the Christian world, wide-spread skepticism and doubt, and a perilous exposure of spirit on all sides to the worst forms of irreligious error.[506]

Still, this was the Church and no other. And it was from within the Church that Martin Luther rose to conceive the twofold principle of the Reformation: justification by faith in Christ alone, and the exclusive authority of Scripture. In this Mercersburg believed Luther sought the means to recover the centrality of the first principle of Christianity. He re-established the relationship to Christ which makes biblical interpretation possible. Yet he did not cheat Scripture. Scripture was above any other "rule" of doctrine or life.[507]

Yet the course of a reactionary imbalance was set with the Reformation. By the nineteenth century it had culminated in rationalism. Schaff argues that the connection between the Reformation and rationalism

[506] Nevin, "Dorner: First," p. 265.

[507] Nevin, "Dorner: First," p. 278.

is an obvious historical fact. Where the Reformation became "the rightful use of intellectual freedom," rationalism became the abuse of that freedom. Rationalism posits itself as the supreme authority beyond revelation and makes freedom above both human and divine law. He writes of rationalism:

> It is a one-sided development of the negative, protesting, antipapal and antitraditional factor of the Reformation to the exclusion of its positive, evangelical faith in the revealed will and word of God.[508]

Schaff adds that rationalism rejects miracles and the supernatural, delimits the effects of sin, tends towards a Pelagian ethic and away from Augustine's notion of humanity's sinful nature and need for grace. Schaff concludes that "the two systems" (rationalism and the Reformation faith), are "theoretically and practically" opposed. Yet there exists "an intellectual and critical affinity between them, and Rationalism is inseparable from the history of Protestantism."[509]

As Richards pointed out, Mercersburg firmly believed that in spite of the Enlightenment's defects it had advanced the cause of religion. Yet the drawback of unlicenced freedom needed to be addressed. A new idea emerged in reaction to the spirit of revolution, one which held together the salient features of the Christian faith. This new concept was "voluntary obedience to authority." Richards writes:

> This was a philosophical basis for the solution of the unsolved theological problem of the Reformers as formulated by Dorner - the scientific union of the material and formal principle, the subjective and the objective factors, in Protestantism.[510]

[508] Schaff, "Modern," p. 28.

[509] Schaff, "Modern," p. 28

[510] Richards, "Mercersburg Considered," p. 129.

Dorner had posed the "problem" for Nevin. He enriched Nevin's concept of the "dialectical process" which brought history to the nineteenth century where "we find ourselves face to face, as it were, with a sort of universal spiritual chaos," and the final struggle in which the faith must seek "the Regeneration of Evangelical Theology."[511]

Nevin, with Dorner, believed it was Kant who began the recovery of the material principle by sustaining "the absolute autonomy of the human will." But equally important in reaction is the "mystic brooding" of Hamann and Herder and the intellectual schools of Wolff and Leibnitz. For in the age's relentless search for truth and morality, the limits of reason and experience were being perceived as coterminous. It was natural that eventually their unity would be re-established once the means were found to reject the perceived opposition of that which is human and that which is divine. Philosophically, the means to that reunion was "subjective certainty." Yet until Schelling and Hegel, intellectual certainty remained impossible in matters relating to the divine. It was up to German Idealism to argue for absoute knowledge of the world of spirit.[512]

Fichte brought the subjective principle "to its utmost conceivable extreme," and thereby forced its inevitable "rebounding into the objective." Nevin writes that although "modern German philosophy, from Kant to Hegel," had been at war with Christianity's dogmatic claims, it was struggling with precisely the same problem facing Protestant theology and its unsolved question left by the Reformation theologians. In philosophy the problem was "the union of subject and object." In theology the question

[511] John W. Nevin, "Dorner's History of Protestant Theology; Second Article," Mercersburg Review, 15 (1868), p. 352.

[512] Nevin, "Dorner; Second," pp. 345-350.

remained the "bringing to scientific union the material and formal, that is. the subjective and objective principles of protestantism . . . " (faith and Scripture).[513]

With Dorner Nevin traced the direction of theological thought, which had led to too great an emphasis of Scripture above the first principle of personal faith, to the Heidelberg Catechism. Here the problem of "reactionary subjectivity" (the excess of unrestrained freedom) led to equally imbalanced "one-sided objectivity" (expressed in dogmatism, ecclesiastical constitutionalism or biblicism). The Catechism, says Nevin, was clearly established in the Reformation's first principle and in subservience to the Gospel as expressed in the Apostles' Creed (as the material principle itself). Yet latent in it was the tendency to emphasize the formal principle. And it was here that the Westminster formulary lost whatever integrity it inherited from the Heidelberg statement by establishing itself first in the written word and not in the living word as Christ incarnate. In this Westminster made justification by faith a doctrine elicited from the Bible rather than the other way around.[514]

The effect was the eighteenth-century malaise of "religious atrophy." Nevin characterized it as a corruptable age dominated by "natural reason" where the unseen world was treated as imaginary. He concludes:

> There was a malaria of rationalism diffused through the whole religious world. The best piety of the age was of a scrofulous habit; while its best theology went wheezing continually toward its own grave.[515]

[513] Nevin, "Dorner; Second," p. 355.

[514] Nevin, "Dorner; Second," p. 357.

[515] Nevin, "Dorner; Second," p. 358.

The nineteenth century saw an improvement. Effectively it set as its goal the overcoming of the irreligion of the eighteenth century. Yet its impediment continued to be a debilitating neuorsis to continue in the errors of the previous century. For Nevin, the churches in England and Scotland continue in the deplorable "latitudinarian liberalism" of the eighteenth century. And the church in Germany continues to pursue "rationalistic supernaturalism" as if still bedevilled by the spirit of Wolff and Kant. Finally the American church founders in the mire of "modus Deum colendi et cognoscendi."[516]

In response to this, Mercersburg proposed a "resuscitation" of theology. That did not mean a return to the past. They saw traditionalism as a grave mistake. For that reason Alexander and Hodge were seen as supporting a hopeless cause. Yet it did mean a return of sorts. Not to former systems, but to former principles. Nevin contends that the recovery of theology requires the recovery of the material principle. Still, this material principle of Protestantism must rest ultimately on the original principle of Christianity. That, simply put, is Christ.[517]

Schaff fully concurred with his colleague and he shared with him a system meant to recover and maintain the centrality of the material principle of Protestantism. His historical analysis not only demonstrated Protestantism's link with rationalism, but described how rationalism rose out of a legitimate critique of Protestant excesses. Schaff adds that

[516] Nevin, "Dorner; Second," p. 359. In his reference to America, Nevin was probably referring to America's practice of "respectable" Protestant pietism.

[517] Nevin, "Dorner; Second," pp. 360-364.

Protestantism's more recent rigid theory of biblical inspiration was invented by Protestants primarily to offset the doctrine of infallibility. In effect, Protestants set an infallible book against an infallible pope, and thus continue to stress Scripture's divine quality to the exclusion of the "human" and "literary" side. The Bible has become a series of proof-texts for favorite dogmas. "It was against this Protestant bibliolatry and symbolatry that Rationalism arose as a legitimate protest."[518]

In America, as Nichols has pointed out, Mercersburg's historical return to the Reformation included their unique presentation of the Reformation doctrine of inspiration, saying that Scripture was not merely inspired in what it had to say, but that Scripture "contained Christ." Nichols writes that this position was altogether "unfamiliar to most American Protestants, who had lapsed again into the mechanical Romanist theory of verbal inspiration."[519]

Ryan supports this adding that what divided Nevin from the majority of American Protestants was precisely this question of the Bible and how it was to be interpreted.[520]

For Mercersburg the issue became the correct starting point. Mercersburg began from what they called the real, yet mystical presence of Christ. As Christ imparts faith to the believer, faith must take its starting point with Christ and not with Scripture, nor with the doctrine of justification by faith, nor with any other such article. Faith must always take its starting point "where Christianity itself starts, and follow the

[518] Schaff, "Modern," p. 40.

[519] Nichols, Romanticism, p. 184.

[520] Ryan, "Nevin," pp. 220-221.

actual movement of Christianity throughout; so that the Gospel shall be found repeating itself as it were, in the form of its believing apprehension."[521]

Missing this point ultimately resulted in the American Protestant fallacy of "respectable biblical divinity." The fallacy exists in the failure to maintain the proper balance of the Protestant material and formal principles, both of which are simply different sides of one and the same principle. Nevin continues to say that what makes the formal principle valid is that Scripture's form "enshrines" that which faith is able to grasp. He concludes:

> All true faith in the Bible, then, is necessarily faith, not in the outward credibility of the Bible simply as established by the usual proofs, but faith at the same time, in the objective supernatural substance which goes along with the outward revelation, and is the very soul and life of it.[522]

The seriousness of this struggle to recover the proper balance of principles led Mercersburg to literary militancy. Nevin referred to the campaign as a "struggle" with the forces of "Antichrist." He went so far as to identify the struggle with "the mystical battle of Armageddon . . . ." Again, it is not a battle against the forces of atheism that is being waged, but a war against "false faith," a struggle of "Christians against pseudo-Christians deceived by Satan," with the dark forces placing their confidence in a literal or subjective word and the true Church which puts its confidence in a living word as objectively comprehended in the Apostles' Creed.[523]

[521] Nevin, "Answer," p. 587.

[522] Nevin, Life, pp. 112-113.

[523] Nevin, "Commencement," p. 497.

Gerhart was one of the first writers from the Mercersburg school to record Mercersburg's deliberate assault on "false faith." His analysis centers on Mercersburg's recovery of the balance of the principles of Protestantism. The fine historian of Gerhart's contribution to the Mercersburg Movement, Charles Yrigoyen Jr., wrote describing Gerhart's demonstration of the Mercersburg view that the

> Protestant theology which was dominant in America during the first half of the nineteenth century was rationalistic and inordinately subjective. It was 'modern' Protestantism rather than 'original' Protestantism.[524]

Several years after Gerhart wrote, Luther Binkley reintroduced the Mercersburg principles. Like Gerhart he sought to demonstrate Mercersburg's recovery of the lost principles of Protestantism. And Binkley pointed to the likely source of the confusion surrounding the principles themselves.

> Really, Schaff stated, there is only one Protestant principle . . . . The material and the formal principles are merely supplementary sides of the same principle. The Protestant principle is that Christ is all in all. The living interpretation of the material and formal principles forms the criterion of genuine and orthodox Protestantism.[525]

Binkley then naturally turned to the very problem which resulted from the imbalance of the one principle: the problem of sects.

For much of American Protestant orthodoxy the "spirit of sect" was fueled by the biblicism which developed from the emphasis of the formal side of the Protestant principle. This did not always lead to the development of a sect. But it did always lead to the development of the

[524] Yrigoyen, "Apologist," pp. 490-491.

[525] Luther J. Binkley, The Mercersburg Theology (Manheim, Pa.: Sentinel Printing House, 1953), p. 57.

spirit of sect or provincialism which, even in Alexander Hodge, amounted to proof texting the Bible to support subjective doctrinal claims.[526]

Schaff also distinguishes between American denominationalism and sects, the latter of which he utterly denounces.[527] Yet, he does allow that sects had functioned as a corrective to the imbalance of outward authority. They were able to arouse an "awakening" from the deadness of orthodoxy. Nevertheless, says Schaff, a sect must cease to exist the moment the body from which it seceded has corrected the errors that led to the secession.[528]

The biblicism which accompanied the spirit of sect was born from the honest and necessary attempt to recover the place of Scripture in the Church. Yet for the American Protestant church of the nineteenth century the formal principle was no longer applied as a corrective but instead biblicism capitulated to the rationalistic principle of subjectivism. In biblistic and fundamentalistic churches rationalism fed the urge to exploit a provincial interpretation of the faith. Yet likewise, rationalism fed the seemingly antithetical movement of high-church episcopalianism and modern Roman Catholicism. Here a new formalism of outward authority based on a spurious theory of apostolic authority fed a similar urge to present their own history and interpretation of the catholic faith.[529]

Mercersburg offered a theory which they felt would resolve the problem of preoccupation with the formal principle. They simply asked,

[526] John W. Nevin, "Hodge on the Ephesians," Mercersburg Review, 9 (1857), pp. 82-83.

[527] Schaff, Reunion, p. 8.

[528] Schaff, Principle, p. 134.

[529] Nevin, "Christ," p. 366.

since the question is of infallible authority, what is the objective source of that authority and how is it mediated? The answer they gave was that all authority proceeds from Christ himself and is given to individual members of the Church through the operation of the Holy Spirit. Thus the authority of Scripture and tradition depends on their reliance on Christ for their validation. The error comes not from the content of the claims of fundamentalism or ecclesiasticism, but from their placing the object of faith in derivative principles.

Once the various denominations recognize and embrace this idea, Mercersburg believed the Reformation could come to a close. But only Christ's spirit could accomplish this.[530] Until then, Nevin concludes, the old Cyprianic system of the Church united by the real, mystical presence of Christ, objectively and subjectively applied, remains supplanted on all sides in the nineteenth century by a principle which binds all schisms to what amounts to a theory of

> full Baptistic Independency, which boldly resolves the whole mystery into the notion of an indefinite multitude of churches formed by 'social contract,' in Jean Jacques Rousseau style, without the remotest imagination of any supernatural right or force whatever.[531]

According to Mercersburg this theory dominated American Protestant ecclesiology. And it was this dominant strain, which, in the form of denominationalism, Schaff utterly denounced in his early American years. Later he softened to the denominational system, but he remained adament in his opposition to sectarianism. He especially criticised it in its pietistic form. Such a theory would destroy the organic union which could

[530] Nevin, "Catholic," pp. 1861-1862.

[531] Nevin, "Cyprian; Third," p. 422.

raise the American church to its necessary status in the world.[532]

Thus in Mercersburg's active participation in literary controversies it sought to denounce and expose publicly any system or theory which they felt disrupted the cause of union by promoting the provincialism of sectarian thinking and by ignoring or minimizing the material principle. The constant substance of their assaults, for Nevin theologically and Schaff historically, was offensively christocentrism, and defensively a radical critique of variant systems and interpretations which substituted the mediation of Christ (by Christ's own spirit) with a source of mediation which suited the subjective demands of that same imbalanced system. The historical and theological character of the development of that strategy is the subject of our next chapter.

[532] Schriver, "Schaff's Concept," pp. 140-142.

CHAPTER THREE - ISSUES IN CONTROVERSY

The third chapter approaches Mercersburg and its German idealistic system's clash with American Protestant orthodoxy, as a discourse in a series of controversies on current religious issues. Nevin himself admitted that the system developed in dealing with the philosophical and theological issues that came to their attention. Here the various articles, sermons and books of Mercersburg and those articles and books by critics who addressed Mercersburg directly are described and analyzed with primary concern given to the issues and the controversies themselves.

In this chapter Mercersburg's approach to the issues is not forced to conform to the system which developed in the wake of controversy, and a historical sequence of development is maintained when looking at the issues in question. The discourse acts as a commentary on the system by displaying the literary architecture which undergirds it. It also allows a critical insight to the reader by exposing the theoretical inconsistencies which naturally appear as the discourse addresses itself to particular issues. The inconsistencies reveal the difficulty of settling contemporary questions such as, did Mercersburg minimize the role of the Holy Spirit by showing for example, that at times, depending on the issue being considered, the role of the Spirit was made to seem minor and at other times the role seemed central? In contrast to the system the discourse allows the inconsistencies to remain even where the system was compelled to eschew them.

AMERICAN REALISM'S DIFFICULTY WITH GERMAN IDEALISM

We begin with a general discussion meant to set the stage for the discourse of controversies. There was considerable resistance by those circles of American Protestant orthodoxy which knew of Mercersburg's work, to their German idealistically informed theology. This section provides some evidence of that resistance and some reasons why Mercersburg was so strongly opposed by the theologians influenced by the tradition of American realism. We also offer some guidelines as to the theoretical basis of Mercersburg's defensive reaction.

Nevin regarded the common sense realist philosophy which informed American Protestant orthodoxy as no "true" philosophy at all. Of course his reasoning depended on Mercersburg's shared conviction that true philosophy is grounded in the search for and apprehension of the age's spirit or idea. Philosophy must be purposefully engaged in self-understanding. Mercersburg believed that the practical and unspeculative methods which dominated American ideas of culture and history were informed by a philosophy which did not believe such a "spirit" or "idea" existed. As such Mercersburg felt that the current philosophic direction in America should not be considered scientific at all. Rather it was a loose confederation of competing ideas about culture and philosophy supported primarily by the dubious insights of English empirical methods. Such methods enforced the strict dualism that resisted the philosophy of spirit. Realists argued for an eternal barrier which limits philosophy's pursuit of truth especially as philosophy must confront the absolute limit of that pursuit in revealed religion. Realism's consistently naive criticism of Mercersburg's attempt to penetrate that barrier was the misguided insistence that Mercersburg's idealism was

inherently pantheistic.[533]

Each time Mercersburg moved against the philosophical division of nature and spirit, whether philosophically, theologically or in the more practical area of ecclesiology, their antagonists reaffirmed the dualistic barrier and the cry of creeping pantheism was sounded.

Against this dualism Mercersburg proposed a monistic concept derived from German philosophy. As did Hegel, Mercersburg criticised the limits imposed by dualistic thinking which led to an antagonism between faith and reason. This dualism was reinforced philosophically by a preoccupation with sense certainty and theologically by a preoccupation with preserving the transcendence of the deity. According to Mercersburg both preoccupations led to a misunderstanding of the importance and place of beginning with experience. Yet at the point of the reconciliation of nature and spirit in the monistic concept apprehended in human consciousness, Mercersburg departed from Hegel and the critical German idealistic tradition.

One popular reading of Hegel's system and one likely shared by Mercersburg (whether correctly or not) anticipates philosophy's raising Christianity to the form of speculative reason. Mercersburg would turn this around. Once philosophy has mastered history's spirit, the world's inward life, it is Christianity that must now master philosophy and bring it to fulfillment. Christianity alone will serve to make philosophy achieve the true end of humanity.[534]

Mercersburg's ambition of teaching America philosophy and then maturing philosophy by bringing it to fulfillment through evangelical

[533] Nevin, "Freedom," pp. 25-27.

[534] Nevin, "Freedom," p. 40.

catholicism was an incredibly bold undertaking even for a movement inspired by the great "inclusive system" thinking of the romantic period. It appears that Mercersburg was satisfied to think that this was the way American Protestant Christianity must move to have force in the world and in history, yet they were content to apply their principles to the GRC and speak up wherever they found resistance or criticism both on the academic and the practical levels. Apparently they never guessed that the greatest and most controversial resistance would come from critics who were confused by their ideas and who in their confusion saw Mercersburg as a monstrous threat to the Protestant faith. For many American minds philosophy and theology were either naturally opposed or completely distinct disciplines. Opposition to Mercersburg's agenda arose both inside and outside of the denomination, as well as from both sides of the theological spectrum. Indeed the Puritan Recorder echoed (of all journals) Brownson's Quarterly Review in rejecting the speculative 'mumbo-jumbo' of German Idealism. And even as recently as 1962, one writer on Mercersburg so discounts the merit of German Idealism that he says it is a wonder that Nevin was as insightful as he was, given his idealistic borrowings.[535]

Princeton, having set itself in the middle of the struggle, displayed equal hostility and often equal ignorance of the meaning of the idealistic language of Mercersburg. For example, in what should have been a review of Schaff's What Is Church History? (according to the title of the review), Princeton's J. Addison Alexander said little about Schaff's historical theories and instead gave an opinionated review of German historiography in

[535] William L. Carlough, "German Idealism and the Theology of John W. Nevin," Reformed Review, 15, No. 3 (1962).

general. He acknowledged Germany's enormous contribution to the history of Church doctrine. But he concluded that that contribution was threatened by the recent theories promulgated by the German historians. Only as Americans employed "common sense" in sifting through these wild theories will the "refuse" be separated from the "wholesome" product. Alexander wrote:

> If all the teeming German minds now striving, like the wise men of Laputa, to extract sunbeams out of cucumbers, could be engaged by some great impulse in historical researches, we should gain a treasure of imperishable knowledge, and lose what? The next stage of Hegelianismus.[536]

As for Schaff's work itself, about all that Alexander would say was that it was "admirable." Yet the all too familiar rub comes over Schaff's concept of "organic growth." Not that Alexander directly opposed it, for it is clear that he did not understand it. Rather, he treated the concept as a metaphor without substance and as essentially parabolic in form. And it had, in his opinion, been picked up by Newman "and applied to the corruptions of the Church of Rome."[537]

What is perhaps most illuminating about Alexander's review is that he never engages Schaff's historiography itself. In this he suggests his confusion as the real source of his discomfort in critically analyzing Schaff's dialectical approach. Instead of analysis he gives us a metaphor or parable of his own which he would substitute for Schaff's metaphor of organic growth.[538]

[536] J. Addison Alexander, "Historical Theology," rev. of What Is Church History? A Vindication of the Idea of Historical Development, by Philip Schaf, Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review, 19 (1847), p. 94.

[537] Alexander, "Theology," p. 107.

[538] Alexander, "Theology," pp. 110-113.

Time and again reviews and articles from Princeton ridiculed the "new German learning" as unintelligibly pretentious and lacking "common sense."[539] Nevin addressed this injustice in a furious reply to Hodge writing:

> At one time, all sympathy with the mind of Coleridge is denounced, because Coleridge himself was an admirer of Schelling, and an eater of opium; at another, the pantheism of Hegel is made the burden of the sweeping question, Can any good thing come out of Germany? I mean no apology for Schelling, Coleridge or Hegel; but such indiscriminate judgments serve not, in the end, the cause, either of religion or science.[540]

Not only was there misunderstanding at Mercersburg's front door in Princeton, but within the GRC itself. The first reported Mercersburg controversy stemming from the direct clash of German Idealism and the Scottish influenced theology prominent in conservative evangelical circles like that of Princeton (and the theology formerly practiced in the GRC), was between Rauch and his colleague at the seminary, Lewis Mayer. Ziegler suggested that Mayer was tainted with the rationalism common among American theologians. His theology was of the Scottish Presbyterian stamp of Dick and Hodge in America. It was loosely Calvinistic, defended as completely biblical, and very short on history. Philosophically it viewed reason in the instrumental sense understood by common sense realists. Reason was not seen as capable of transcending the limits placed upon it by the senses. Naturally Rauch would have seen this as primitive. And it was the nature of his personality to express his disdain of Mayer's approach publicly. The

[539] Charles Hodge, "Nature of Man," Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review, 37 (1865), p. 43.

[540] Nevin, "Antichrist," p. 4.

conflict led to Mayer's withdrawal from the faculty.[541]

Undoubtedly when Nevin arrived at Mercersburg it was apparent to him that Rauch's novel approach had created a stir. And while whatever philosophical background he had was surely in the common sense tradition, he preferred instead to identify himself with the idealism of Rauch (certainly with his own qualifications). He was fully aware of America's lack of exposure to and suspicion of German Idealism. And in his rather early review of Rauch's philosophy (1840), he sought to clear up some points of dispute. Yet his article goes no further than to draw the stark distinction between the "Scotch Consciousness," which he believed was all too familiar to his readers, and the German consciousness of Rauch. Again, in the Scottish tradition individuality is mechanically defined in the system of psychology which understands the operation of the mind as the movement from sense experience to thought. With Rauch, says Nevin, it is not individuality but personality which is the unity of consciousness. And personality is not considered in terms of its function but in terms of its development.[542]

Honest exchange between or a synthesis of the ideas of American realism and Rauch's German Idealism (although idealism was not unknown in America) was severely hampered by the confusion of realists concerning the "new learning." At Harvard, one representative of the realist tradition, Francis Bowen, reviewed the second edition of Rauch's Psychology. His review demonstrates that other than comments about the style and organization of Rauch's book, Bowen is not well enough acquainted with

[541] Ziegler, Rauch, p. 32.

[542] Nevin, "Psychology," No. 38.

German Idealism to comment on Rauch's position.[543]

According to Nevin, New Haven's Dr. Murdock fared no better in understanding the young German idealist. Rauch's unique approach left Murdock without a critical analysis, abandoning him merely to denounce Rauch as a pantheist out of the Hegelian school.[544]

Princeton had the advantage of personal contact with Rauch. Yet the result of their rather surface exposure to the complexities of the German philosophy's language, concepts and method led even Princeton to resort in criticism to the ploy of dismissing Rauch's work by categorizing it under the reductionistic heading of pantheism.[545]

The foreignness of Rauch's language and method would have made America's acceptance of him difficult. But even with Nevin's support, the German Idealism of the Mercersburg school came into constant criticism for its complexity. Many simply believed it to be a complexity of nonsense.

James Good believed that Nevin only confused Rauch's system all the more, being an American of the Scottish stamp and thus not intelligent enough to comprehend it.[546]

Charles Hodge, the probable author of a review of Schaff's, "Anglogermanismus," called German speculative reason "worthless," and found it lamentable that so many Germans, gifted in the practical areas of real worth, wasted hours "in earning immortality by efforts to discover

[543] Francis Bowen, rev. of Psychology; or, a view of the Human Soul, by Frederick Rauch, Christian Examiner, 30 (1841), pp. 385-388.

[544] John W. Nevin, "Philosophy of Dr. Rauch," Biblical Repository, 10 (1843), p. 419.

[545] Alexander, "Psychology," pp. 393-410.

[546] Good, History, p. 313.

what is non-existent and to do what is impossible."[547]

Finally, within the GRC itself, the opponent of Mercersburg, Samuel Helfenstein Jr., declared the Mercersburg theology to be unintelligible to its readers, especially when it came to their novel psychological theories. And as proof of their departure from the theological tradition of the GRC in America he reprinted sections of the Westminster Shorter Catechism saying Mercersburg had violated the "good old" theology of "Edwards' New England."[548]

Mercersburg's response to all of this came in the form of critique and apology (although most of Schaff's own work was not in response to criticism but rather the product of his endeavors in the field of historiography). They began by identifying the source of criticism and attacking that source in the historical and philosophical context provided them by their method.

Their critique centered in the identification of virtually every Protestant ill as stemming from Protestantism's identification of the supernatural quality of the Gospel and the Church with a subjective system which appealed to its own interpretation of "divine authority."

This deep-seated principle surfaced in the practical rejection by Protestants of the sacraments as "divine acts . . . working towards salvation." This disposition was fundamental to Baptists, but it had seeped into the Lutheran, Reformed, Methodist, Presbyterian and Congregational

[547] Charles Hodge, ed., rev. of Der Anglogermanismus, eine Rede u.s.w., by Philip Schaf, Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review, 18 (1846), pp. 482-483.

[548] Samuel Helfenstein Jr., "The Mercersburg Controversy," Weekly Messenger of the German Reformed Church, 2 (New Series), No. 21 (1846) and, "Union with Christ and Human Authority," Weekly Messenger of the German Reformed Church, 2 (New Series), No. 27 (1846).

denominations as well.[549]

The Episcopalians were divided. Those of the "low" ecclesiastical tradition were no different in Mercersburg's mind than the Baptists. The "high" church Episcopalians, while having recovered the centrality of the sacraments, made everything hinge not on the supernatural effect of the sacraments, but on a truncated theory of the Church of England's original authenticity and authority.

In effect Mercersburg was arguing that in every American system which opposed them, the block consistently was the false dualism which made acceptance of the real, unmediated presence of the supernatural impossible. Mercersburg's response was to identify the subjective, historical source of each block and expose it as such.

This included Nevin's criticism of his own tradition. In direct contrast to Dick's arguments on union with Christ, where union is interpreted as legal and mystical, Nevin adds a third source of union, ethical. In this he means to reject the realist position that religious reality can be understood as value free, through a neutral science.

Nevin writes that the union itself is hypostatic, joining our essence with our life. It is accomplished on the divine side by the Holy Spirit and on the human side by faith, working in unison with each other.

Dick would not allow a union of essence "or of person." By this he would avoid any hint of the deification of Christians. Nevin believed such a confusion could be better avoided (without directly contradicting Scripture's reference to the real deifying of believers in Christ) by reminding his students that the unity of essence we share with God is

[549] John W. Nevin, "The Anglican Crisis," Mercersburg Review, 3 (1851), pp. 369-370.

accomplished in the union of our essence with the "humanity" of Christ.

Nevin implied that Christians of Dick's persuasion had long since given themselves over to the phantom Holy Spirit as the mediator of union. The Spirit had become the source of distance from the divine image of Christ, rather than as intended, the veritable source of unity with the person of Christ. In Mercersburg's view the effect was a rationalizing of the Spirit's role as it exists in the subjective system of Dick.

In Mercersburg's attempt to allow the supernatural full participation in the natural it became essential for them to eliminate the false dualism which prohibited real participation. The catholic doctrine of the Holy Spirit recognizes the Spirit's office as the mediator of the union between Christ and the believer, and not the protector of Christ's transcendence. Nevin concludes that we have no relation with the infinite, the divine, except as we are united with Christ's humanity through the true Spirit of Christ.[550]

Although Nevin believed that this point was not clear in Calvin's system and may have contributed to the confusion over the Spirit's role in unifying the believer with Christ, Calvin's eucharistic theology accomplished what his pneumatology failed to accomplish. According to Nevin, it is precisely the old Calvinistic eucharistic doctrine of union with Christ that Dick confessed made no sense to him.[551]

Again, what Mercersburg felt they must dispel in American Protestantism was the popular myth, fueled by rationalistic subjectivism, that Protestantism was essentially the recovery of Christian life and

[550] Erb, Nevin's Classroom Lectures, pp. 290-291 and Dick, Lectures, vol. II, pp. 164-169.

[551] John W. Nevin, "Sacramental Religion," Protestant Quarterly Review, 6 (1849), p. 130.

doctrine at the time immediately following the apostles. For them this myth presented a major obstacle to overcoming American Protestant orthodoxy's rejection of the ideas of the mediating form of German Idealism which emphasized the progressive development toward Christian creativity and unity, both spiritual and physical. As long as American denominations believed they were preserving the true Church, they supported, consciously or unconsciously, the wave of sectarianism which swept the country. In their delusion that they were the true Church of Christ, each Protestant denomination emphasized its distinctiveness, and thus made physical unity and cooperation impossible, and spiritual unity and cooperation merely the rhetoric of an ecumenical vogue.

Nevin described the myth shared by Anglicans and Puritans alike as a belief in a post-Apostolic "golden age." In contrast, what Nevin finds at that early stage is something quite different from what is being claimed and practiced by the Protestant churches. He finds the belief in the divine Church as a single visible unity with Christ truly present in her midst. This, he says, is a far cry from the prevalent Protestant view of private judgment or the Bible as the source of faith.[552] Nevin argues that it is sheer madness to believe that the earliest Christians, like Ambrose and Augustine, were evangelical and very much like the modern cast of a pious Protestantism.[553]

Evidence that the 'myth' was a primary source of criticism against the claims of Mercersburg, as well as an interpretation of the so-called true Church supported by American realism, can be found throughout the

[552] Nevin, "Early Christianity: First," pp. 480-487.

[553] Nevin, "Early Christianity: Third," p. 13.

controversial discourse itself (most articles of which will be treated in this chapter). For example, in attacking Nevin's article on the Apostles' Creed, John W. Proudfit argues for Princeton that the early faith's identity was cast in what amounts to his own contemporary picture of American Calvinism. For Proudfit the Creed is a response to an already developed faith which is essentially a believing in the promises of God. And as source, he takes for support the philosophy of John Locke (Reasonableness of Christianity). And his historical account of the Creed can be described as a theory of the Creed as purely a product or summary of the Bible itself.[554]

Like other contemporary critics of Mercersburg, Proudfit spent little time grappling with the fundamental principles behind the Mercersburg system. As such one finds considerable confusion on the part of Proudfit when he complains about what he perceives are Mercersburg's violations of American Protestant orthodoxy's sacred cows. For example, in a Protestant religious climate where the majority are hotly opposed to anything Roman Catholic, he is shocked by Mercersburg's insistence on the seemingly Romish view which supports the visible Church's "power and supremacy." Furthermore, he is certain they intend to "antiquate" Scripture and to "nullify" inspiration. Proudfit writes, Mercersburg makes verbal inspiration impossible.[555] On the contrary, the earliest church held that private judgment derived solely from Scripture as the only rule of faith. He concludes:

[554] John W. Proudfit, "The Apostles' Creed," rev. of "The Apostles' Creed" by John W. Nevin, Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review, 24 (1852), pp. 605-617.

[555] Proudfit, "Apostles' Creed," pp. 627-628.

> The doctrine of the Protestant and Primitive Church (for they are indeed one, and in no respect is their unity more clearly and beautifully revealed than by their unanimity on this point,) is simply this, that the inspired and written word of God is the only source and rule of the Christian faith - that the truth revealed in it shines by its own light, and needs no ecclesiastical or popish spectacles to behold it; that to apprehend and imbibe that heavenly light requires only the open eye of the soul, the spiritual apprehension; and that this is the gift of God, by the operation of the Holy Spirit.[556]

We conclude this section with a last and similar example of the most frequent responses by Protestant orthodoxy to Mercersburg, this time from the pen of Thomas Skinner. Skinner wrote for the Princeton Review in order to attack Mercersburg's "new philosophy" and its rejection of the idea that the Bible is its own witness. The case made by Skinner is that the Bible does not require any outside source for its interpretation. He argues that the Bible literally stands on its own. The Bible does not require the Creed to interpret its central issues.

The authority he cites for his case is none other than the ancient church itself, which he concludes has always believed in the self-evidence of Scripture. And for proof of this he cites Joseph Butler as a more contemporary "orthodox" source of his argument.[557]

CIVIL ORDER

We have identified two recorded controversies which occurred prior to Nevin's arrival at Mercersburg. The first was already mentioned as originating in Rauch's open hostility toward Mayer's conventional theology. There is very little information available about this conflict. Still, Appel mentions that Mayer's teaching "fell in with the current theology of

[556] Proudfit, "Apostles' Creed," p. 653.

[557] Thomas H. Skinner, "The Bible Its Own Witness and Interpreter," Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review, 32 (1860), p. 410.

the Reformed Church in his day" which Nevin simply described as "Puritan and Presbytyerian."[558] The other very early controversy arose in Nevin's sometimes unpopular political stand on issues. This section concentrates on the positions and general outlook Nevin and Schaff took toward the issues surrounding the question of civil order.

Nevin's firm stand on the controversial issue of temperance had created tension in the Presbyterian denomination prior to his arrival in Pittsburgh. While at Pittsburgh he edited The Friend (1832) and published the Temperance Register (1834). In the growing controversy surrounding the issue of slavery Nevin was quick to assert his anti-slavery position. This created such a reaction by the pro-slavery forces in Pittsburgh that eventually Nevin was forced to resign as editor of The Friend.

However, Nichols has shown that Nevin's radical behavior and strong convictions were not inspired by the same idealistic spirit he would exhibit at Mercersburg. Rather, his stands were given direction by the Presbyterian brand of evangelical Puritanism which was supported by the positions he admired and the authors he read. And yet his particular stand on issues was not motivated by hero worship or a passion for getting involved in radical politics. Rather it seems more likely that Nevin's positions resulted from his attempt to adjust his political behavior according to his deepest convictions about life, religion and politics. We would expect from his Mercersburg idealism that even at this early stage his stand on the contemporary issues would develop from his political consciousness which needed to question the doctrinaire of nineteenth-century puritanistic legalism, sabbatarianism and revivalism. However, at

[558] Thomas G. Appel, "The Internal History of the Seminary," Mercersburg Review, 23 (1876), pp. 62 & 64.

this early stage, the evidence indicates a steadfast loyalty to the Puritan system which he would later criticise. And it is also clear that his reading in economics and politics was not instrumental in his conversion to idealism. On the other hand, it is equally clear that his search for a unifying system led him to question the values of his early training. As early as 1839, prior to his coming to Mercersburg, Nevin conceived of a theory of democracy which is remarkably unified and romantically humanistic in character.

In his address, "Party Spirit" (1839), he conceives of democracy as the spirit of disinterested cooperation where true "patriots" willingly surrender their private interests for the good of the state and where pluralism is the worst form of selfish individualism.

While no evidence surfaces to indicate the early involvement of Mercersburg in controversy over the party system, the popularity of the Jacksonian ideology may suffice to give evidence that Nevin's early position on the character of democracy was not shared by everyone.

Nevin continued to argue that the future order of civil government and the direction of the state and its citizens would founder in the morass of self interest unless steps were taken to recover the true spirit of American democracy. Eight years after his paper on the party system Nevin expanded his criticism of the direction of the American civil spirit in an article entitled, "The Year 1848." In this article Nevin acknowledged the work of Taylor Lewis who had written that same year. Like Lewis Nevin concentrated on the infectious revolutionary spirit of Europe and with him shared the opinion that the unbridled passion of Europe's revolutionary spirit was sheer wickedness. But, writes Nevin, the divine is at work in this passion. He acknowledged that humanistic passion was nothing other

than a by-product of the Reformation. And for this very reason Nevin found it impossible to believe that the European upheaval was working toward a selfish end and that the conflicts would result in a secular age. Rather, he believed that what is born of the Reformation must develop according to the historical principles from which the turbulence arose.[559]

America's "individualism" led him to expect in America a nationalistic movement whose aims were not truly democratic but self-serving. Yet in opposition to this false nationalism, there is in the American spirit an ongoing drive toward a more inclusive universal order. The current strain of provincial and sectarian thinking is not the final step in America's development, but only the necessary manifestation of its growing self-awareness. Nevin writes:

> It is not America wrestling with the world, as Hurcules [sic] overcame the serpent in his cradle: but it is the world itself rather, wrestling in its own inmost constitution, through the medium of American influence, towards a general and common end, which may be said to embrace the sense of its whole history for centuries past.[560]

Nevin sees the eventual demise of "Nativism" and its problems in history's inevitable progress. Nativism would disappear as Europeans immigrated to America.

His criticism of nativism is its "mechanical" interpretation of the American state which sees the state merely as an institution to promote America's physical expansion. This is to miss entirely the force of mind in outward development and the importance of morality in governing the direction and force of the expansion of commerce.

[559] Nevin, "1848," pp. 16-19. Also, Taylor Lewis, "The Revolutionary Spirit," a tract, New York (1848), n.p.

[560] Nevin, "1848," p. 30.

It is Christianity's obligation to keep pace with "the onward movement of the world:"

> The accelerated, concentrated, consolidated action of the world's outward life, must lead in some way to a corresponding energy in its moral organization.[561]

Nevin continued to argue for the concomitant advances of science and moral religion. And as late as 1867 he was still convinced that America's growing preoccupation with technology, without the corresponding emphasis on the arts, was leading towards the debilitating horror of a purely materialistic society. Not that he objected to science and the advance of technology; in fact he applauded it. He argued that the human race's true spirituality depended on the physical and was utterly conditioned by the physical at every level. Rather,

> All we need to protest against in this case, is the insanity of making nature, in its own sphere, the end of all knowledge; the madness of imagining, that moral interests can ever be subordinated safely to material interests; the wild hullucination of dreaming, that the great battle and work of life for man is to be accomplished by physics and mechanics, by insight simply into the laws of nature and mastery of its powers, by chemistry, geology, mineralogy, metallurgy, and other such studies, by polytechnic ingenuity and skill applied in all manner of ways to business and trade. There is a higher view than all this, in which the study of nature becomes itself the study of mind, and the material meets us everywhere as the sacrament of the spiritual and divine.[562]

[561] Nevin, "1848," p. 40.

[562] Nevin, "Commencement," p. 507. This statement has a prophetic ring to it especially when compared to the following contemporary statement by John Kenneth Galbraith. "These men of the technostructure are the new and universal priesthood. Their religion is business success; their test of virtue is growth and profit. Their bible is the computer printout; their communion bench is the committee room. The sales force carries their message to the world, and a message is what it is often called." From, John Kenneth Galbraith, The Age of Uncertainty, Houghton Mifflin Company: Boston (1977), p. 271.

Nevin's position on women was less progressive. His universalism led him to believe that sexual identity permeates all of creation. He believed the soul or the mind possesses a sexual identity and that that identity extends throughout the body. Yet Nevin erroneously uses this position to reject the theory behind the emancipation of women. Turning from his universal principles, which he must have recognized did not of themselves contradict the theory of the emancipation of women, he instead argued from custom and, in a twist that seems to mock his own efforts against biblicism, from Scripture writing:

> It [the theory of the emancipation of women] has the universal custom of the world against it, and also what would seem to be the most explicit testimony of the bible . . . . It violates morality and nature alike.[563]

Nevin's argument here reminds us of the limits of prophetic vision, and his concluding comment is dated enough to make even a chauvinist wince. He concludes that considering the physical and spiritual constitution of women, their role must remain secondary.[564]

However, several years later Nevin seems to have reconsidered his former position on women, or at least he became more sensitive to the injustices in American society. In an address Nevin sought to make the student body of Franklin and Marshall College conscious of these injustices by borrowing an idea from a play by Richard Brome in which the roles of social status are reversed. His point is to make his students sensitive to the injustices of society, primarily those injustices toward women and

[563] Nevin, "Moral Order," p. 570.

[564] Nevin, "Moral Order," p. 570.

blacks.[565]

Philip Schaff wrote that same year on the subject of slavery, openly voicing his objection to it. Nevertheless, Schaff clearly indicated that he did not believe it was simply an issue of emancipation but a much deeper issue of race.

What Schaff means by this can perhaps be clarified by saying that he believed that the American blacks were descendants of the race of Ham, and that their benefits in America outweighed their oppression. So, in spite of an anti-slavery stand, Schaff, like Nevin on women, remained conditioned in his thinking by a popular chauvinist dogma. On the other hand, Schaff did support a plan to assimilate blacks into American life by not only freeing slaves, but also training them in various occupations in order that they might be upwardly mobile members of American society.[566]

The last issue of note having to do with civil order is that of Church and state. We mentioned Nevin's early suspicion of Rome's political aims regarding America. With time his suspicion of Rome eased. Yet he never stopped believing that the American churches' strength lay in their unique voluntary system which kept the Church free from state control (and vice versa) and which allowed Christians to submit freely to Church authority without social or political pressure from the state. It appears that upon Schaff's arrival in America he made it very clear that he found voluntaryism to be the fruit of sectarian influence. However, he soon changed his thinking and became a strong proponent of voluntaryism, arguing that it provided the possibility for an ideal balance of political and

[565] John W. Nevin, "The Antipodes or the World Reversed," Mercersburg Review, 13 (1861), pp. 215-238.

[566] Philip Schaff, "Slavery and the Bible," Mercersburg Review, 13 (1861), p. 316.

religious authority.[567]

For Schaff voluntaryism offered an effective means of keeping the balance between freedom and authority. Yet he was concerned lest the importance of "freedom in religion" be mistaken for freedom from religion, or the freedom of "any" religion.[568]

Schaff would insist that religion is fundamental to the American republic and that even a majority could not remove this principle from the original charter of the country. Equally, he adds, "Christianity is the only possible religion for the American people . . . . " And to prove his claim he refers to the American Constitution. He writes:

> The Constitution did not create a nation, nor its religion and institutions. It found them already existing, and was framed for the purpose of protecting them under a republican form of government . . . ."[569]

Furthermore, Schaff argued that America's sensitivity to protecting individual religious freedom was never meant to aid the proliferation of sects and non-Christian religions in America, but it was meant to insure that the prevailing theological perspective, which maintained that individual faith in Christ cannot be required by outside authority but must develop freely as an individual conviction of the heart, became an article of Constitutional law.

So, while Mercersburg held to the separation of Church and state, they did not support a separation of the Church from American political and

[567] Philip Schaff, "The State Church System in Europe," Mercersburg Review, 9 (1857), p. 151.

[568] Philip Schaff, Church and State, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons (1889), p. 16.

[569] Schaff, Church and State, p. 23.

cultural life. They did not treat the Church and state as antagonistic institutions. Rather, they understood the Christian Church to be the legal, moral conscience of the state, with the state remaining morally as well as legally obligated to promote the spirit of evangelical catholic principles in the national life without becoming financially or politically involved in the Church's development.

HEIDELBERG CATECHISM

Both Nevin and Schaff brought with them into the GRC strong political feelings about civil order. However, it appears that once they had settled in Mercersburg there was virtually no controversy over these positions. Rather, antagonism toward the movement developed as Mercersburg applied their general principles theologically (as, for example, their doctrine of the Church). The minor civil disturbances created by Nevin at Pittsburgh were not repeated at Mercersburg. However, had Nevin taken a church in Philadelphia, there is reason to believe controversy over his political principles would have continued. It appears that the people of rural Pennsylvania, around Mercersburg, either shared their seminary professors' political outlook, or they simply did not find that outlook objectionable enough to warrant controversy. Again, Mercersburg's major controversies developed primarily over church related issues.

The seeds of one of the earliest controversies were planted almost immediately upon Nevin's arrival at the seminary. Those seeds were the series of articles Nevin did on the Heidelberg Catechism.

We begin our treatment of those church related issues with the Heidelberg Catechism controversy, which did not really become a controversy until 1852. While this was certainly not the date of the first public debate to issue from Mercersburg, its source lies much earlier than even

Nevin's arrival at the seminary. In addition it represents some of Nevin's earliest work.

Nevin began the controversial history of the Mercersburg Movement on December 9, 1840 with his first installment in the Messenger of his "Essays On the Heidelberg Catechism." Nevin would soon discover that from then on his work would be met at the same time with praise and with criticism both within and outside of the GRC.

In the first few installments it appears that his readers found Nevin's dusting off of the old symbol useful and not contentious. Yet after a brief interruption Nevin returned in 1842 to his subject and to the topic of Calvin's doctrine of the Lord's Supper and its influence on the Catechism, and found he had called forth a tempest. It was Nevin's belief at this early stage, a view which he would adjust only slightly in later years, that Calvin's sacramental theology is the sacramental theology of the Heidelberg Catechism.

It is in these articles that Nevin calls the Supper a "mystery." It is here that he speaks about the "real presence" of Christ, arguing that Zwingli's view must be regarded by the denomination as "rationalistic and superficial," and he told his readers that it must be recognized that Zwingli did not sway the Reformed Churches in Europe to his view.[570]

In this article Nevin argued for an actual union on the part of the believer with the life of the "Savior's glorified body." Such a union established the believer's participation in the "whole nature" of Christ, just as sinful man shares the nature of Adam through natural birth.[571]

[570] John W. Nevin, "Essays On the Heidelbergh Catechism," Weekly Messenger of the German Reformed Church, Dec. 9, 1840 - April 14, 1841; April 27, 1842 - June 8, 1842; July 13, 1842 - August 24, 1842.

[571] Nevin, "Essays," p. 1373.

Nevin's argument is clearly meant to correct the thinking which dominated the GRC that the more rationalistic teaching of Zwingli was the true source of Reformed doctrine on the Eucharist. He contended that the view he presented was surely Luther's, and that Calvin subscribed to it as well, although in a "more ethereal form." (With Calvin, says Nevin, the experience is described as an ascent to Christ.) Yet in Nevin's view the fact remained: both held to the real presence, and such was the teaching of the sixteenth-century Reformed Churches.[572]

The first chord of controversy had been struck. One of Nevin's colleagues at the seminary, Professor Reid, complained in the pages of the Messenger that he believed that Zwingli had received harsh treatment at the hands of Nevin. Yet, for the most part, there was general agreement by Reid with Nevin's treatment of the Catechism itself. He admitted his approval at every point but one. Says Reid, Zwingli has been cast "too strongly" in the rationalistic mold.[573]

However, it is clear that Reid's article is neither meant to criticise Nevin, nor recover the name and theology of Zwingli for the GRC. Rather, it appears that Reid simply seeks to offer scholarly criticism of Nevin's overemphasis of the degree of Zwingli's rationalism.

But this minor ripple was not the first of the small storms that became the later debates over the Heidelberg Catechism and the Reformed doctrine of the Lord's Supper (two distinct yet related issues). Gerhart writes that long before even the arrival of Rauch to the GRC at about the time of the turn of the century, the general cultural and theological

[572] Nevin, "Essays," p. 1373.

[573] S. Reid, "Luther and Zwingle: Zwingle's Doctrine," Weekly Messenger of the German Reformed Church, 7 (New Series), No. 43 (1842), p. 1418.

deterioration of the denomination had begun to be felt. Gerhart believed that the cause of the deterioration was excessive rationalism, along with pietism and sectism at the hands of both European and American religious groups. The deterioration continued until the establishment of the theological seminary and high school (which became Marshall College). Yet positive steps had already been taken by the Classis of Maryland. They petitioned the Synod to investigate whether the Heidelberg Catechism should not be "the only book used in the instruction of youth and in the catechetical class . . . . "[574]

However, the first phase of the GRC's recovery of its European theological heritage at Mercersburg must be attributed to Rauch. It was he who was first among the Mercersburg writers to give thought to the Heidelberg Catechism and raise the issue of the Reformed doctrine of the Supper in the pages of the Messenger.

In his articles, "German Characteristics," Rauch demonstrates a strong, conservative Christian piety in arguing that the recent German immigrants must be included in the GRC's educational efforts. These efforts should reach out to all Germans, embracing for its model the union church in Prussia, which was working to lay aside theological differences in order to establish Christian unity.

It was Rauch's idea to include the immigrants in denominational programs of growth and education. His example was the Prussian church. And his comments on the Prussian church led to his comments on the Catechism and its doctrine of the Lord's Supper.

Rauch felt that certain antiquated points of doctrine, namely election and the means to Christ in the Supper, continued to divide orthodox

[574] Gerhart, "The German Reformed Church," Mercersburg Review, 14 (1867), pp. 206-6, 268, 274-275.

Protestants in America and Europe. It was nothing other than an inability on the part of certain individuals to recognize and appreciate the advances recently made in scientific theology. Rauch wrote:

> the Lutherans, in fact, no longer believe in transubstantiation [sic], their views approaching at least to those of Calvin on this subject; the Reformed, on the other hand, except a few learned men, never held the doctrine of austere predestination, as it is held by strict Calvinists.[575]

He continued:

> In the Heidelberg Catechism, the symbol of the German Reformed Church, the strong Calvinistic doctrine on predestination is not contained, and the decisions of Dordrect on this subject, were expressly rejected by the Reformed in Brandenburg, and never received in Germany.[576]

Hence, concluded Rauch, historically, nothing should hinder the cooperation between those who are Lutheran and those who are German Reformed.

Controversy over Rauch's articles developed in the wake of the venomous reply to Rauch printed in the Lutheran Observer. The clergyman who replied was adamant in condemning and correcting Rauch's statements. Yet in spite of the vicious nature of the letter, the point which the anonymous writer wished to make was that Rauch was wrong to say that Luther's doctrine of the Supper was called "transubstantiation," but in fact "consubstantiation." (An error Rauch corrects in the Messenger No. 35.) More importantly, the clergyman was concerned to point out that Lutherans today, and probably at the time of the Reformation, rejected the "magical" superstition of consubstantiation.

[575] Rauch, "German Characteristics," No. 30.

[576] Rauch, "German Characteristics," No. 30.

The writer's argument is meant to show his allegiance, and with him his fellow readers of the Lutheran Observer, to a theological position similar to that of Zwingli, the position Mercersburg would call "rationalistic." This was not the last time Mercersburg would clash with the Lutheran Observer.[577]

While Rauch may have whetted the appetite of the GRC for the lost Catechism, and while he may have been a source of Nevin's interest in the subject, it was Nevin's series of articles in the Messenger which generated a religious renaissance in the denomination. The Messenger responded with an article which attributed the denomination's recent "growth, zeal and revival" to the recovery of the Heidelberg Catechism.[578] The same opinion was echoed by Gerhart several years later when, in his inaugural address before Heidelberg Theological Seminary (1851), he praised the influence of the Mercersburg theology in the GRC's cultural recovery in which renewed interest in the Heidelberg Catechism had produced a significant recovery of the denonmination's confessional identity. And he concluded with a warning, that no one should take seriously those who would have us believe that the Catechism is at odds with the Bible.[579]

It was also Nevin who was at the center of the most volatile of the controversies surrounding the Catechism. The volley began with Nevin's tract, History and Genius of the Heidelberg Catechism (1847), followed by his introduction to G.W. Williard's translation of the German Commentary of

[577] Rauch, "German Characteristics," No. 35 & No. 39.

[578] Weekly Messenger of the German Reformed Church, Feb 4, 1843.

[579] Emanuel V. Gerhart, "Hold Fast the Form of Sound Words," in Addresses and Essays of Schaff, Nevin, and etc. (Mercersburg, Nov. 1853). Schaff's personal edition, Princeton Theological Seminary Library, n.p., n.d., pp. 15-16.

Dr. Zacharias Ursinus on the Heidelberg Catechism, and Nevin's own article, "Zacharius Ursinus" (1852). The return of volley came with John W. Proudfit's review of Nevin's introduction to the commentary (1852). The last round was an article by Nevin in which he tried to explain Mercersburg's position in distinction from the position of the Dutch Reformed Church in a clear attempt to ease tempers and settle the controversy.

Nevin's History and Genius of the Heidelberg Catechism (Chambersburg, Pa., 1847), was essentially a repetition of his earlier work on the Catechism. There was, however, some evolution in Nevin's thinking. But what caused the greatest storm was Nevin's article on Ursinus five years later. He had made it clear in this article that he believed that the Catechism is in full sympathy with the Catholic tradition insofar as the Catechism supports positive religion. Says Nevin, unlike so many theological diatribes, the Catechism avoids the "subtleties of Calvinism," and unlike these diatribes, it is broader and more open to the general character of religion itself.

Yet Nevin complained of the problem created by Ursinus when he followed Calvin's explanation of Christ's descent into hell and the uncharitable denunciation of the Roman Mass. He concludes that except for these points the Catechism is an excellent example of catholic thinking and a genuine reflection of an irenic purpose, no doubt deriving from the influence of the gentle Melancthon.[580]

Ostensibly Proudfit's response was in the form of a review of

[580] John W. Nevin, "Zacharias Ursinus," Mercersburg Review, 3 (1851) pp. 501-503. Nevin was already aware of Melancthon's influence on the GRC prior to his coming to Mercersburg in, Nevin, "Party Spirit," p. 28.

Williard's translation. In actuality Proudfit represented a movement within the Dutch Reformed faculty of New Brunswick Theological Seminary to resist the teachings of Mercersburg. (Proudfit was supported by the defector from the GRC and recent addition to the New Brunswick faculty, Joseph Berg). His article is essentially an attack on Nevin's alleged ecumenical parlance with the theology and practices of the Roman church. Proudfit writes that the Catechism is not at all concerned with avoiding the difficulties and "thorny dialectic subtleties of Calvinism . . . . " Indeed, the Catechism is thoroughly Calvinistic. Secondly, Proudfit argues that the "mystical element" reported by Nevin neither exists in Calvin, nor does it exist in the Catechism. Finally, he concludes, the "Mystery" which Nevin is trying to impose on the Reformed faith, is nothing other than his attempt to fool the denomination into accepting the teachings of Rome by supplanting Reformation doctrine and replacing it with Rome's superstitions,[581]

Proudfit was especially anxious to expose Nevin's sacramental hoax. The so-called gentle tone of the Catechism could not be supported by questioning the significance of the Catechism's denunciation of the Roman Mass (question 80). Proudfit holds that question 80 is an integral part of the Catechism, in spite of Nevin's view that it was not included in the first and second editions of the Catechism, but was inserted by Frederick later. Proudfit supported his argument by pointing out that his was the position of Nevin himself in his History and Genius of the Heidelberg Catechism (a point no doubt corrected in Nevin's mind by Ursinus' commentary). There, says Proudfit, Nevin argued correctly that the

[581] John W. Proudfit, "The Heidelberg Catechism and Dr. Nevin," rev. of the Commentary of Dr. Zacharias Ursinus on the Heidelberg Catechism, Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review, 24 (852), pp. 108-119.

denunciation of the Mass was part of the original text, but was omitted. Nevin's most recent reversal only serves as proof of his changing loyalties.

The last volley came in response to Proudfit's article. Strangely conciliatory, it was meant less to condemn the theological perspective of Proudfit and his supporters, and more to explain the position of Mercersburg as consistent with the tradition of the GRC. Nevin was primarily concerned to describe the legitimate differences between the German and Dutch Reformed traditions.

The article begins with the issue of the place of question 80. But the real issue at stake with regard to question 80 is Nevin's attempt to soften Protestant resentment of the Roman Mass.

Effectively, says Nevin, Proudfit's problem with Mercersburg's position on the Catechism and on the commentary of Ursinus is twofold. First, Proudfit has trouble with the Catechism's "mystical element" and second, Proudfit dislikes Nevin's claim that the Catechism is in "sympathy with the old catholic life of the church."

Nevin's response first attempts resolution of these problems by distinguishing between the "Reformed confession" in its broadest sense, and the Heidelberg Catechism itself, and then to set out the differences between the German and Dutch Reformed Churches on this matter.[582]

Nevin writes that the Reformed confession is, in spirit, a way of thinking which recedes basically from Lutheran and Roman Catholic thought. On the other hand, Puritan thinking begins from the

> extreme left of this prismatic spectrum, the greatest possible refraction, where the light of Christianity shades off finally,

[582] John W. Nevin, "The Heidelberg Catechism," Mercersburg Review, 4 (1852), pp. 163-165.

through the faint violet of Baptistic Independency, into clear Unitarian negation.[583]

Thus Nevin sets up the dialectic between two religious phenomena which must reflect upon their confessional traditions. He concludes that there can be no question but that the Heidelberg Catechism does not belong to the current system of Puritan practice. Instead it is much closer to the original Lutheran confession. Along with this confession it is clearly "in felt organic connection with the past life of the church in its universal character."[584]

If a spectrum of right to left were considered, the extreme right of ancient catholicism would be at odds with the extreme left of modern unitarianism. Now unitarianism is, by nature, liberal. It is indifferent to doctrine and substantially rationalistic. It establishes no positive content for faith and life. Catholicity, in contrast, presupposes the contents of faith and truth in a concrete dogma which is given in the form of historical religion necessary for all people as a universal doctrine of truth.

Toward the center of the extreme positions is a Dutch Reformed position which historically had its source in the right, but has demonstrated a tendency towards the rationalistic. That direction is being supported and promoted by those members of the Dutch Reformed seminary faculty who would tend to go further towards the left. To this tendency Nevin issues a challenge. Until Dort the Dutch had held firmly to the eucharistic teachings of the Helvetic and French churches subscribed to by

[583] Nevin, "Heidelberg," p. 165.

[584] Nevin, "Heidelberg," p. 165.

the Palatinate. Furthermore, they did not, prior to Dort, require their churches to submit to the teachings of Geneva concerning Geneva's position on double predestination.[585]

Nevin concludes, the Heidelberg Catechism must remain a symbol true to its historical origin and not be made to suit a tendency which clearly drifts toward the rationalistic and more recently, toward the modern Puritan scheme which actually prefers a non-confessional, independent Christianity. Says Nevin, the Heidelberg Catechism

> is primarily the leading standard symbol of the German Reformed Church. It is Calvinistic; but the force of this distinction lies mainly in its doctrine of the sacraments; while on the subject of the divine decrees, it falls in rather, as far as it goes, with the Melancthonian view, avoiding however the more knotty points of the matter altogether.[586]

Therefore, the Catechism remains suited to the spirit of the GRC which has always stayed clear of the higher points of Calvinism and even those of the Belgic Confession and certainly of Dort. Nevin concludes:

> There is a difference here between the Dutch and German churches, with all their close historical relationship, which it is very important always to bear in mind; a difference that grows mainly out of another relationship on the German side; that, namely, which this bears at the same time to confessional Lutheranism.[587]

The recovery of the place of the Heidelberg Catechism in the GRC continued to stimulate the denomination, although its wide acceptance and use was as yet a dream of the Mercersburg Movement. In 1857 Henry Harbaugh conceived of the idea of a Tercentenary Celebration which would restore the

[585] Nevin, "Heidelberg," pp. 169-174.

[586] Nevin, "Heidelberg," p. 176.

[587] Nevin, "Heidelberg," p. 182.

importance and use of the Catechism for the GRC. The Classis of Mercersburg formalized the recommendation in 1859 and a celebration was set to mark the three-hundreth year since Frederick put the Catechism in circulation in 1563.[588]

It was not until the twentieth century that interest in Mercersburg's controversial position on the Heidelberg Catechism was renewed. In 1953 a son of the GRC, Bard Thompson, who had written his doctoral dissertation on Melancthon's influence on the GRC, published an article which summarized his important research. Thompson concluded that no one theologian or view is represented in the Catechism. His article establishes what his dissertation's painstaking examination of the Palatinate texts revealed. The Catechism shows the influence of not only Calvin and Melancthon, but of John Laski as well as others.[589] Thompson continued to stimulate interest in Mercersburg and the Catechism by publishing an article in 1963 called "The Catechism and the Mercersburg Theology."[590]

Four years later, in 1967, another significant writer, Brian Gerrish, published, "The Lord's Supper in the Reformed Confessions." Here Gerrish reaffirmed the idea that the Heidelberg Catechism "is not so much anti-Calvinistic as timidly Calvinistic." He reaffirmed the position of Mercersburg that it goes beyond Zwingli in its sacramental theology. However, ultimately he rejects Nevin's conclusion by suggesting that the

[588] Henry Harbaugh, ed., Tercentenary Monument (Chambersburg: M. Kieffer & Co., 1863).

[589] Thompson, "Melancthon," p. 172.

[590] Bard Thompson, "The Catechism and the Mercersburg Theology," in Essays on the Heidelberg Catechism, ed. R.V. Moss, Jr. (Philadelphia: United Church Press, 1963), pp. 53-74.

Catechism does make a deliberate move towards Zwingli's position and especially towards Bullinger, particularly when it came to the issue of the sacramental means.[591]

NEVIN AND CALVIN

Perhaps the most general source of controversy surrounding Mercersburg came from what critics perceived was its departure from the "old faith" of Calvin. Again it was Nevin at the center of controversy, since it was he who began his career very much a Calvinist in the Scottish and American tradition. It was also Nevin who deliberately distinguished Mercersburg from the theology practiced at Princeton and certain leaders of the GRC. This section will discuss the controversial aspects of Nevin's departure from the American Calvinist tradition of his youth.

It appears that the seeds of Nevin's controversy with Calvinism, as it was practiced at Princeton and its "Old School" tradition, were planted during Nevin's stay at Western. It was during that period that the Presbyterian "Old School" and "New School" controversy had culminated in the trial of one of the "New School" leaders, Albert Barnes. It may have been this trial which led Nevin to investigate the Presbyterian Church brand of Calvinism and the legitimacy of their understanding of the fall, the imputation of sin and the doctrine of the decrees of God.

Prior to the trial, during Nevin's earliest theological period at Princeton and at Western, there is little question that he was a thoroughgoing Calvinist, bearing the Princeton stamp, deriving his position from the Westminster tradition and the Federal Theology of Cocceius and

[591] Brian A. Gerrish, "The Lord's Supper in the Reformed Confessions," Theology Today, 23 (1967), p. 241.

Witsius. And yet even at this early stage he sought a modern application of his Calvinistic tradition.

In an early sermon Nevin dutifully argued that God's sovereignty required election. This, he said, can be recognized from Scripture and from everyday experience. To these more obvious evidences Nevin also added the logical proof from natural causality.[592]

But Nevin's real objective in this sermon is to minimize the painful contradiction between election and predestination, and the popular desire for theologians to affirm human freedom. In what must be seen as a departure from "rigid" Calvinism, and yet a common position among modern evangelicals of Nevin's day bearing the "Puritan" stamp, Nevin insists on individual human freedom in receiving or rejecting the Gospel. In addition he makes it clear that Scripture and common sense testify that the Gospel is offered universally.

Rather than attempt reconciliation of this dilemma, Nevin's sermon recommends that Christianity should not be made to stand or fall on what clearly must remain a paradox of existence itself. After all, says Nevin, the paradox is not a practical problem at all. Second, without any solution, it remains that both election and free will are credible doctrines. And finally, to the degree that there are practical implications of the doctrines, it can only be their deep identification with the human soul. As such they play upon the psychological nature of human experience, and in that experience one finds that the two doctrines can be "felt" by the "same mind" as without "opposition or discord whatever."[593]

[592] John W. Nevin, "Election Not Contrary to a Free Gospel," Presbyterian Preacher, 1 & 2 (1832 - 1834), p. 211.

[593] Nevin, "Election," pp. 213-217.

It is certainly remarkable that at this early date Nevin seems to be searching for the hermeneutic that will solve the riddle of election and free will. It is also interesting, but given his exposure to realism it is not incredible, that he looks to psychology as the point at which the two competing doctrines can be mediated, if not resolved.

He continues his sermon by employing historical proofs which demonstrate how these two antithetical doctrines have existed through history in an harmonious antithesis. His practical proofs seek to show how those who have held to the doctrine of election have concurrently manifested impeccable moral restraint throughout their lives.[594]

Nevin wants to justify the complementary existence of two seemingly antagonistic doctrines. No doubt he was engaged in the same shoring-up measures shared by other Calvinists interested in defending the tradition against modern criticism, hoping to conserve the thread of orthodoxy while allowing for progress and the changes which were inevitable. Still, his argument depends on presuppositions taken from the two disciplines which would lead him into German Idealism, psychology and history. Nevertheless, his traditional decreetal theology remains intact and he has not yet opted for an idealistic argument of identity in an attempt to explain what at this stage he accepts as a necessary paradox.[595]

Later in his life Nevin would label his early theological position as "metaphysical Calvinism." His sermon on election may represent his reflection on this theology. Much later Nevin described its primary fault as an absence of an historical understanding and a primitive view of human.

[594] Nevin, "Election," p. 217.

[595] Nevin, "Election," p. 221.

nature and experience. Rather than allowing his system to revolve around the revelation of Jesus Christ in history, says Nevin, Calvin's system understands revelation as progressive and deriving exclusively from the divine will. Thus creation, the fall and even the incarnation, along with human behavior itself, derive from an injunction to preserve God's sovereignty by making everything rationally consistent with an impassible divine will. The result is a self-consistent doctrine for the understanding, rather than a doctrine consistent with "the proper actual life of the world itself."[596]

Nevin's "metaphysical Calvinism" certainly came into question during the Old and New School controversies in the 1830's. Nichols has pointed out that Nevin sided with the Old School line and approved of Professor Alexander's scheme to decentralize the denomination "into a loose federation of synods." Says Nichols, in spite of his Old School loyalties, Nevin hated the infighting among the groups.

Nevin considered himself, at that time, to be slightly right of center in the Presbyterian split which led to the trial of one of the New School leaders, Albert Barnes. Evidence of Nevin's interest in this trial is very slight and is composed of brief references to what Nevin believed was a significant result of the trial, namely that the Old School's doctrine of the fall was not identical with Calvin's doctrine of the fall. This inconsistency may have led Nevin to question Princeton's interpretation of Calvin, and it may have led him to investigate Calvin's theology for himself.

Charges had been brought against the Reverend Albert Barnes by the

[596] Nevin, Life, p. 51 & p. 54.

Reverend George Junkin ("the great divider of Presbyterians"). While the charges were quite numerous, the one Nevin continually referred to was number six, that Barnes denied that the original sin of Adam is imputed to his posterity. To this Barnes replied that neither he nor the Presbyterian confession hold this position, so it is wrong to charge him with denying what is not taught by the church. Rather, countered Barnes, he does confess with the tradition of the church, that it is the "guilt" of Adam's sin which is imputed to Adam's posterity.[597]

What follows in Stansbury's account is a clarification of this distinction. It is this clarification of Barnes to which Nevin later refers as the source of a significant distinction between the positions held by the Old School (and Princeton), John Calvin and Albert Barnes himself.

The first reference is in 1848 where in Nevin's Messenger article (directed at Hodge), he is defending his theory of humanity's organic union in Adam. In article eleven Nevin argues that our relationship with Adam must be organic otherwise the church will find itself once again caught in the Old and New School "antithesis."

He means here to argue that in the dilemma which developed from the Presbyterian debate of how Adam's sin is imputed to humanity, Barnes called attention to the fact that the imputation of sin or of guilt was not the doctrine of Calvin but of a later development within Reformed scholasticism.[598]

[597] Arthur J. Stansbury, Trial of the Rev. Albert Barnes, Before the Synod of Philadelphia (New York: van Nostrand & Dwight, 1836), pp. 63-65.

[598] Nevin, "Dr. Hodge," No. 47.

A second reference to the trial and the different theories of how Adam's sin was imputed to his posterity appeared the same year in a tract by Nevin which also attacked Hodge's criticism of his book, the Mystical Presence. Here Nevin suggests that Princeton's doctrine of sin is not Calvin's.[599] But the most telling reference to the trial, and the most sound evidence that the trial had an impact on Nevin's understanding of Princeton and Calvin, came in Nevin's reply to Joseph Berg (1849). Here Nevin clearly seeks to expose the fact that the common view that Calvin's doctrine of sin held that Adam's sin or guilt was juridically imputed to his posterity, may be a doctrine held by Hodge and those who subscribed to this "Puritan" brand of theology, but it was not the theology of Calvin.

Nevin considered Barnes to have shown in his defense (1836) three positions at issue. The Princeton doctrine held to outward imputation of sin. The "older writers" (e.g. Calvin) had held to a "real union" between Adam and the human race. Thirdly, Barnes, rejecting both Princeton and the Old School theology as well as the "older writers" of the Reformation, argued simply that the Bible only teaches that human beings are sinful through Adam and that was enough for him.

Nevin's reference was meant to demonstrate once and for all that his theory of organic union with Adam was more consistent with Calvin and the "older writers" than was the position of Princeton. Undoubtedly, the trial brought this distinction to Nevin's mind long before he thought to question his own "Puritan" position.

In this example we see how Nevin would begin to break with Princeton's thinking by not only questioning their interpretation of the "Calvinistic

[599] Nevin, Antichrist, p. 16.

tradition," but by identifying himself with those ideas of Calvin which were sacramental (the question of organic union), and criticizing those aspects of Calvin which he called "rationalistic," aspects which he believed were the substance of Calvin's "decreetal theology."

THE HISTORICAL DEPARTURE

The time of Nevin's actual point of departure from Calvin, or rather from the "metaphysical Calvinism" of Princeton, is an issue of great debate.

James I. Good identifies the publication of Schaff's Principle of Protestantism (1845) as the point at which Nevin fell out of harmony with "the previous theological position of the seminary . . . . " Before his transformation under the influence of Schaff, he was "a churchly Pietist." Good thinks that Nevin "was Calvinistic in doctrine, that is his whole system of doctrine was based on Calvin." Nevin accepted predestination and the old understanding of the sacraments. Later, however, "he ridiculed Calvinism as a system . . . ." Good believed that Nevin had deceived himself into thinking he had found the solution to the objections to Calvin by the Arminians.[600]

In terms of Nevin's own writing, Good believed with Proudfit that Nevin demonstrated his departure from Calvin in the later articles on the Heidelberg Catechism. In Nevin's articles of 1841, Good maintained that Nevin "held that the Heidelberg Catechism was Calvinistic on predestination and the Lord's Supper." Yet in his History and Genius of the Heidelberg Catechism (1847) he held that the confession is essentially Melancthonian in character and that it is Calvinistic only in its sacramentalism. Predestination is passed over, except as it is identified with the

[600] Good, History, p. 107.

providence of God. And the Catechism itself "is of Lutheran extraction and semi-Lutheran in spirit." Furthermore, argues Good, in the earlier articles Nevin had identified the GRC with the entire family of Reformed Churches. But in his later work he declared her independence and unique character and history.[601]

More recently James Nichols wrote that in 1843, at the age of forty,

> Nevin passed through a radical theological reorientation to a new high-church and sacramental tendency of which he was to be the most significant American spokesman.[602]

Nichols identified the main cause of this "reorientation" as Nevin's strong reaction to "new measures revivalism." But even then he remained true to his tradition by quoting his old professor, Alexander, in warning against "the religious dangers of popular revivalism." So while 1843 marks the point of Nevin's sharp reaction, the seeds of this reaction were traced by Nichols back to Pittsburgh where Nevin edited Joseph Lathrop's Christ's Warning to the Churches, to beware of False Prophets.[603]

More specifically, however, in sympathy with Good, Nichols considered Schaff to be the source of Nevin's dropping his predestinationism. And it was from Schaff, and from their common reading of Heppe, that Mercersburg was led to identify Melancthon as the primary theological influence on the GRC.[604]

In contrast, Theodore Appel seems to imply that Rauch played the

[601] Good, History, p. 257.

[602] Nichols, "Nevin," p. 72.

[603] Nichols, "Nevin," pp. 73-74.

[604] Nichols, Mercersburg, pp. 19-20.

crucial role in influencing Nevin in his new direction.[605] He demonstrates Rauch's influence by describing the changes he made to the seminary curriculum.[606]

Another, perhaps fuller perspective is offered by K. Plummer. Plummer stands with the majority in arguing that when Nevin was at Western Theological Seminary

> his theology was Calvinism modified by the Federal Theology of Cocceius and Witsius, which took in the notion of covenants allowing a certain right to the human side of God's dealings with mankind.[607]

Plummer believes that this is evident in Nevin's sermon, "The Seal of the Spirit" (1838). But Plummer adds that even as he was being schooled in scholasticism at Princeton, Nevin experienced a negative reaction to this theology which effectively stemmed from his dissatisfaction with the denomination in general. Nevin deplored the widespread "blind" acceptance of the Westminster Confession, as well as the almost superstitious approach to faith. His criticisms led to his articles on "Faith" (1840) where, while there is no repudiation of metaphysical Calvinism, there is strong criticism of Federal Theology for producing "a barren tradition."[608]

Plummer implies that Nevin's articles on "Faith" led the search committee of the GRC to request that Nevin be asked to consider teaching at the seminary in Mercersburg. In Nevin's 1840 sequel to the articles on "Faith," which were called "Worldlimindedness," he

[605] Appel, The Life, p. 102.

[606] Appel. The Life, pp. 418 & 481.

[607] Plummer, "Theology," p. 23.

[608] Plummer, "Theology," pp. 24-26.

> has clearly rejected any concept of faith as belief in correct doctrine derived from religious truth given the believer in the Bible in the form of logical propositions for the understanding.[609]

Plummer believes that at this point in Nevin's development he saw faith as a capacity lodged in the individual's moral sense. Faith is the capacity which, when stimulated by the Holy Spirit, apprehends the world beyond the senses. The "speculative reason" is the means by which this world is recognized, as reason understands reality at a deeper level than is possible through the senses. "This aspect of his thinking represents a considerable departure from Federal Theology particularly of the rationalistic school."[610]

In addition, Plummer notes that at this point Nevin has reinterpreted other aspects of Federal Theology. He sees the fall as "the transference of the central concern of man's life from the world of spiritual realities to the world of time and sense . . . ."[611] He also removes himself from Federal Theology's attachment to the "historical-grammatical school" of biblical interpretation. Instead his hermeneutic is speculative and, in bold sweeping generalizations, Nevin now identifies the development of biblical religion within the process of the soul's maturing in the deepest aspects of human experience. Finally, Plummer believes that Nevin begins to articulate a concept of the regenerate person as "filled with the power of a divine life . . . ." which is based on "a real and inward union with the life of God . . . . " Plummer concludes that it may have been in fact

[609] Plummer, "Theology," p. 51.

[610] Plummer, "Theology," p. 51.

[611] Plummer, "Theology," p. 51.

Rauch's influence which was behind Nevin's discoveries.[612]

In spite of Nevin's changing views, Plummer notes that as late as 1844 (prior to his sermon on "Catholic Unity") he still held to one Federal concept, that man's moral sense was limited by the fall but not erased. Nevertheless, Nevin considered this capacity as the source of "spiritual vision" rather than merely remnant knowledge of God's moral law as taught by the Federal school. Furthermore, Nevin still held a strong place for obedience to God's law, but now it was the law of God's divine purpose for humanity rather than an abstract code of moral conduct.[613]

The nature or character of Nevin's departure from Federal Theology can be summarized as a rejection of the decretal aspect of that theology. Federal Theology stresses God's absolute sovereignty, which includes his determination from all eternity of all events which come to pass, according to his own pre-determined plan. Thus while the divine decrees are those events which come to pass, in actuality there is only one decree by which God's pre-determined plan is foreordained before all time and must necessarily come to pass. For Nevin, and for virtually everyone who has raised an objection to this doctrine, the problem concerns predestination. Nevin's reconsideration of this doctrine centers in his rejection or modernizing of what he believed was Calvin's faulty theory of human psychology. What Nevin believed to be the nature of man is distinctly different from what, at the earliest stage of his interpretation of Calvin, he thought Calvin believed. Yet it must be made clear that Nevin came to believe that his greatest difference was not with Calvin, but with

[612] Plummer, "Theology," pp. 52-53.

[613] Plummer, "Theology," p. 92.

contemporary Federal theologians.

As Nichols points out, Nevin attempted to correct Calvin's understanding of human experience in his Mystical Presence (1846). Nichols writes, "It seemed to him that Calvin did not sufficiently distinguish the plastic organic law of life from the chemical materials of body." However, in Nevin's subsequent study of Ebrard's work on the Reformation writers, he became less sure that Calvin was wrong in his understanding of human psychology.[614]

Yet, as Thompson has shown, Nevin did see Calvin's doctrine of the decrees of God as inconsistent with his doctrine of the Lord's Supper. This would imply that where he found real, organic union with Christ in the sacrament, Calvin's insight was at the heart of human experience. When, however, Calvin was describing experience according to its ordering by abstract laws like predestination, he was erring toward rationalism.[615]

Brian Gerrish also noted Nevin's conviction that there "is a fundamental disharmony between Calvin's predestinarianism and his sacramentalism." Gerrish suggests that Nevin believed that the Reformed "obsession with the divine decrees was directly connected with decline in the authentic Calvinistic view of the Eucharist."[616]

But Nevin's real battle was with contemporary models of human experience and psychology, especially those which contended that they best

[614] Nichols, Romanticism, p. 100.

[615] Thompson, "Catechism," p. 70. Thompson suggests that it was Hodge who made Nevin aware of Calvin's inconsistency. But it is just as likely that Nevin's earlier study of Ebrard provided the insight.

[616] Gerrish, "Flesh," p. 70.

adhered to the "old" Reformed faith. Hodge and Berg, for example, represented very different theological perspectives, yet they were united in their criticism of Nevin and his alleged departure from Calvin. Thus Calvin represented the theologian against whom the modern theological positions on Reformed tradition were to be argued and judged.

Yet Nevin himself openly admitted his departure from Calvin even on the subject of the Eucharist. He wrote in reply to Berg and Hodge:

> I have never pretended to agree with Calvin at every point, in my representation of the mystery of Christ's presence in the holy eucharist.[617]

However, says Nevin, each detail of the sacramental means is not at issue. What is at issue is whether it is Reformed to hold the concept of

> a dynamic presence, by the Spirit, in distinction from every sort of local presence on the one side, and every sort of merely moral or mental on the other.[618]

The conception of a dynamic presence, Nevin argues, is unquestionably Reformed. Furthermore, he adds, it is equally undeniable that Hodge, Berg and others have not admitted this and have continued to affirm a "merely moral or mental" experience of Christ in the Eucharist.

Still, at the heart of Nevin's departure from Calvin was his commitment to bring Reformed theology up to the standards of modern science and psychology. Although his adjustment of Calvin's psychology in the Mystical Presence was reconsidered after study of Ebrard's work, the principles of that adjustment continued to be part of Nevin's theory of

[617] Nevin, "Sacramental," p. 129.

[618] Nevin, "Sacramental," p. 129.

human understanding. Furthermore, Nevin never doubted that the problem which developed among the Reformers as to the nature of Christ's presence in the Eucharist stemmed from their intense drive to rationalize the mystery of Christ's presence.[619]

Again, the stumbling block was the Reformers' primitive concept of personality. Without the concept of organic law, Calvin was forced to treat the personality abstractly as a soul and body dichotomy. Instead, says Nevin, by beginning with a concept of being in which material and mental phenomena are organically related, life or being is recognized as a unified "system of life."[620]

As an example of the Reformers' dilemma, Nevin suggests the much-debated problem of Christ's being seated at the right hand of God. According to their outmoded, dualistic metaphysics, Christ's presence in heaven makes explaining his presence in the Eucharist problematic. Nevin believed that Calvin did seek to overcome this problem by depicting the mystical presence of Christ in the Eucharist as an elevation of the believer to heaven. But again, Calvin's explanation seeks to solve the problem of local presence and the assumption that

> local material contact is necessary, to sustain a true and strict continuity of existence, either in the sphere of nature or in that of grace.[621]

Such a dualism provokes a treatment of union as a question of the melding of separate categories of flesh and spirit, as if, for example,

[619] Nevin, Mystical, p. 154.

[620] Nevin, Mystical, pp. 155-156.

[621] Nevin, Mystical, p. 157.

Christ's flesh and spirit are not "necessarily and inseparably knit to his soul, and to his divinity too, as a single invisible life . . . . " In contrast, Nevin argued that just as thought, which is focused on another time or place, has a unified subject as its cause, so also Christ projects himself into the community of believers as a complete personality, both fully human and fully divine. Calvin, Nevin insists, missed this point. Bound by his rejection of anything resembling local presence,

> he found it necessary to resolve the whole process into a special supernatural agency of the Holy Ghost, as a sort of foreign medium introduced to meet the wants of the case.[622]

NEVIN'S POSITION

To correct Calvin's misunderstanding, Nevin suggests German Idealism's perception of the "generic" quality of Christ's personality, such that all that that personality produces has a direct organic connection with its origin. Therefore, while Christ's life remains his individual and separate life on the one hand, in another sense all those born of that life "share one and the same life."[623]

The description of that mysterious union is contained in a series of theses presented in the Mystical Presence. Here Nevin seeks to resolve the dilemma of Christ's presence in the experience of the believer by arguing within the Reformed system itself. Thus he begins with the fall. (1) The ruin of creation in the fall of Adam "is an organic ruin" which extends to all creation. (2) In the organic quality of life, sin can be recognized as passed from generation to generation, and as permeating the entire

[622] Nevin, Mystical, pp. 157-158.

[623] Nevin, Mystical, pp. 160-162.

organism, of every individual, both body and soul.[624]

(3) In order to accomplish salvation, justification had to organically replace the effect of sin. Therefore, salvation had to reach sinful humanity wherever sin had worked its harm. Salvation had to retrieve the whole person and not just the soul. Nor could the sinner simply be declared forgiven, since the sin has a real, organic and thus moral effect on the sinner.[625]

(4) The one who would remove that sin would therefore have to have real organic union or contact with the sinner in order to produce a change in his nature and behavior. He would also have to have real organic union with God (i.e. be God) in order to have the authority and power to remove the effect of sin's curse. (5) In this union the believer begins a new life - not merely as one begins a new direction after being declared innocent of wrongdoing; rather, the believer begins a new life springing from the organic change which constitutes a new being. Neither is this new life merely spiritual, touching only the soul of the individual, but a new human life, touching all that constitutes personality.[626]

(6) Since new life requires new birth, and as every human being needs a birthplace, the Church, as the source of new life, is the birthplace of the body of Christ. (7) This new birth implies "substantial" change involving every aspect of the believer's being, including its "centre." (8) "This is the mystical union; the basis of our whole salvation."[627]

(9) Although our generic relation to Adam is parallel to our relation

[624] Nevin, Mystical, pp. 164-165.

[625] Nevin, Mystical, pp. 165-166.

[626] Nevin, Mystical, pp. 166-167.

[627] Nevin, Mystical, pp. 167-168.

to Christ, union with Christ is infinately more significant because of who Christ is. Union with Christ is distinct in the nature of its essence. Our union with Adam is through natural birth. But our union with Christ is constituted in Christ's constant and personal activity within the individual believer. "Schleiermacher" spoke "of the communication which Christ makes of himself to the believers, as moulding the person . . . . " This "moulding" forms in the person a "higher consciousness."[628]

(10) This union must be with the humanity of Christ, for any other "true union" would be a "hypostatical union" which would imply identity with the godhead. (11) Likewise, Christ is united to our humanity. (12) In this, any Greek and Platonic notion of abstract dualism is cancelled. (13) Nor is there room for a strictly material encounter with Christ. As an organic union, it is enough that the union exists in the Church, just as the branch of the vine is properly related to the original seed that gave it life. (14) Yet this implies no "dissipation" of Christ's body such that, as in some forms of pantheism, a part of Christ is engrafted or communicated to our nature.[629]

(15) Because of its character, this union is unlike any other in the natural world. (16) The union's medium is the Holy Spirit, such that the shared life is fundamentally spiritual. However, the body is included in this union, since there is no opposition between the ideas of body and spirit. (17) And although the medium of the union is the Holy Spirit, the union itself is with Christ.[630]

(18) While the consummation of this union is initiated in the

[628] Nevin, Mystical, pp. 168-169.

[629] Nevin, Mystical, pp. 169-174.

[630] Nevin, Mystical, pp. 174-176.

mediating role of the Spirit and Christ himself, whose person encounters the individual, the consummation in the life of Christ is not possible without the proper disposition of faith on the part of the believer, (19) Final consummation is achieved on the day of resurrection.[631]

(20) The sacramental signs are a physical medium for this union. (21) As such the sacramental body and blood indicate Christ's real presence. (22) They also refer to his atonement through his sacrificial death. (23) This is the source of real communion.[632]

The rest of the theses more or less repeat themes already mentioned. They end with the rejection of various heresies.[633]

Nevin concludes by asserting that all this is to say that Christianity is a life (as comprehended by St. John the Divine) and not merely a rule or way of life.[634]

Nevin's "Reformed" resolution of the Reformer's dilemma created an enormous problem for many of his conservative peers. While he did seek to bring Reformed theology into line with modern theological science, his "adjustment" of the Reformed position made a crowning and dearly beloved doctrine of the system outmoded or incorrect. Of course the doctrine of which we speak is predestination.

As Nichols has suggested, Schaff, who on this and related issues was clearly more Lutheran than Reformed, probably led Nevin to drop the doctrine of predestination.[635]

[631] Nevin, Mystical, pp. 176-177.

[632] Nevin, Mystical, pp. 179-180.

[633] Nevin, Mystical, pp. 181-204.

[634] Nevin, Mystical, p. 214.

[635] Nichols, Mercersburg, p. 19.

Schaff's later writings made his position on predestination very clear. Schaff believed that the unfortunate doctrine of predestination had its source in the Church's attempt to explain the present sinful nature of the human race as a result of the single act of the fall. Predestination's logic led to a denial, among the Reformers, of freewill, in order that they might "cut out the last roots of human merit and boasting." Basically the Reformers' excesses were a result of their recognition of human sin and God's grace.[636]

In Schaff's later years (1890) he was involved in resolving the Presbyterian Church's struggle with the doctrine of predestination and the Federal Theology in general. In this struggle Schaff argued against the schoolmen mentality of the high-Calvinists and the Lutherans in their pursuing logic "with a vengeance." Calvin meant to instill in the mind of the believer certain cardinal doctrines such as the sovereignty of God and election by grace. These doctrines should never be compromised. But to venture beyond them, to the thorny points of supra- and infralapsarianism, is another matter altogether. While these doctrines may aid the thinking of an individual believer, they should never be required of the Church as a whole. Says Schaff, even Calvin kept to infralapsarianism and his own catechism avoids the morass of reprobation.[637]

Schaff simply concludes, "Without some degree of freedom there can be no responsibility." And while the logical consistency of supralapsarianism is attractive, "what is logical is not necessarily theological." For if we

[636] Schaff, "Genius and Theology," pp. 100-117.

[637] Philip Schaff, Creed Revision in the Presbyterian Church (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1890), pp. 24-25.

adopt all of the restrictions of logic, we must go beyond even supralapsarianism. We must make God the author of sin, accept no distinction between good and evil as in pantheism, or we must adopt universal salvation. ("This is the scheme of Schleiermacher, the greatest theological genius of the nineteenth century.")[638]

All of these conclusions are rejected by Schaff. Yet he does assert that the Gospel is offered to all and that there is much to indicate that "all those are saved who die in a state of preparedness for the acceptance of the gospel if it were offered to them."[639]

In these matters, says Schaff, it would be better to be illogical than to deny the scriptural teaching that grace may extend to even the unbaptised.[640]

The specific direction of Schaff's theological attack against predestination and decretal theology is aimed at the question of the timelessness of God's existence. Having no before or after, no point can be fixed in the expanse of time and space when God could be said to have "formed a resolution or passed a decree . . . . We reason from our human stand-point, and ought, therefore, to be cautious and modest."[641]

Schaff's most forceful attack against the Federal Theology (which had become for him in America synonymous with Puritan theology) as it came to the Presbyterian system through the Westminster Confession, centers in his historical analysis. Schaff writes that its roots lie in Augustine's extreme position which left no room for freedom. In Augustine's system God

[638] Schaff, Creed, pp. 25-27.

[639] Schaff, Creed, p. 28.

[640] Schaff, Creed, p. 29.

[641] Schaff, Creed, pp. 30-31.

simply chose from the descendants of Adam and Eve those who were elect, while the rest were condemned to damnation. Calvinism only intensified Augustine's system. While the sixteenth-century Reformed confessions restricted their consideration to the positive doctrine of election, the Westminster Confession, a century later, included in its standards "the negative decree of reprobation . . . ." Schaff writes that the effect was an attack on practical religion.[642]

Schaff concludes by echoing the Mercersburg theme, calling for a theology which does not begin with the eternal decrees but with Jesus Christ, and a theology which does not start with divine justice but with divine love.[643]

Although we report Schaff's position regarding predestination from writings which are considerably later than his arrival at Mercersburg, it is clear that his German education prepared him for an entirely different approach to the problem of human sin and God's sovereignty long before his battles with Puritanism. Furthermore, it is clear that Schaff's conviction helped to finalize Nevin's drift away from Federal Theology. Nevin's critical dialogue with the popular position on predestination, as it is drawn from Nevin's reaction to Dick's theology, is vividly evident in his lectures on the topic from the period around 1851.

In treating the traditional arguments surrounding the fall, Dick sets those arguments within the context of a scheme whereby God slowly reveals his grand design to the world. Nevin, in contrast, begins with the world as

[642] Schaff, Creed, p. 41. The Dutch were recognized as having done the same thing at Dordt. The Puritans in early New England were brought under the same umbrella through the influence of Ames and others.

[643] Schaff, Creed, p. 42.

a natural state in which religious phenomena are the events tying mankind to the creator. In this natural state religion offers the individual the opportunity to "realize the perfection of human nature." This realization can be described in human history as the development of the religious idea in human consciousness. No doubt Nevin's description of the stages of this development had its indirect source in Schleiermacher. Rauch is likely to have been its direct source.

From the first stage of "animal consciousness" there develops the stage of "feeling" or emotion. From this comes the ability to distinguish the subject from the object. This distinction becomes the source of the concept of "other." In distinguishing the self from the other there exists the means to recognize the self as both subject and object. Likewise, such a recognition provides the idea of recognizing the subject as not being the source of itself. Here lies the feeling of utter dependence on another for its being.[644]

The characteristic dialectical development of consciousness maintained by Nevin is in stark contrast to Dick's description of human religious development as a series of dispensations. Each dispensation brings the elect closer to the final stage of revelation by virtue of the amount of revelational truth. As each stage nears the end of history, God allows the elect to see more of his ultimate plan.[645]

In Nevin's system internal principles govern the development rather than the anthropomorphic "hand of the maker" which is a popular

[644] Erb, Nevin's Classroom Lectures, pp. 58-59.

[645] Dick, Lectures, pp. 147-156.

providential motif in traditional Calvinistic terminology.

There are also clear linguistic distinctions made by Nevin which demonstrate his rejection of the essentially Federal approach of Dick. Dick consistently refers to the "existence of God" while Nevin refers to the "idea of God." Where Dick assumes a description spanning time and space, Nevin recognizes that in speaking of God before creation, it remains an understanding of God conditioned by the evolution of the idea of God in human experience and consciousness. The thread that holds that idea together for Nevin is his concept of the organic unity of all experience. In contrast to Dick's description of the ontological proof, we find Nevin imposing a teleological scheme on his analysis.

It is evident that in both theologians there exists the desire to save the Calvinistic system from obsolescence by bringing it into conformity with modern experience. Yet each has a different perspective of what that entails. At this stage neither reject predestination nor the decrees. Yet both adopt Molinism (divine foreknowledge) to soften predestination's paradox.[646]

However, Nevin does completely restructure Dick's discussion of predestination. While both begin by describing the debate between the supra- and infralapsarians, Nevin immediately side-steps the doctrines themselves as ultimately not useful. Here we see Nevin maintaining the same points which Schaff held and described later in his career.

Nevin contends that supralapsarianism is arbitrary and leads to

[646] Dick, Lectures, p. 158 & p. 351. Erb, Nevin's Classroom Lectures, p. 64, p. 70 & p. 138.

fatalism. He sees in it an Hegelian like flaw, for it makes the world as it is today, just as it was originally designed and untransformed by the incarnational event. Ultimately the decrees of God in the supralapsarian scheme are gross abstractions from real existence, depending entirely on a rationalistic bias.[647]

Moving now to a more contemporary criticism, it has become common to argue that where Mercersburg made one of its most critical departures from the tradition of Calvin in America was in its silence on the role of the sacramental nature of the word and the general role of the preached word in their system. We have already said a great deal about Mercersburg's giving first priority to the living Word of Christ. This living Word took precedence over the Bible. Schaff wrote that he believed the Reformed high view of Scripture was one of the few distinct differences between Calvin and Augustine, who, sharing Mercersburg's tendency, acclaimed the authority of the Church as first order.

Yet Schaff himself would see his position as somewhere between the two, so that there need not be disagreement between those who would uphold the tradition which establishes canonicity as a curb to rationalism, and those who would establish that tradition upon the essential principles derived from Holy Scripture.[648]

James Nichols wrote that the effect of Mercersburg's emphasis on the Eucharist and their silence on the word as sacrament, would lead to a

[647] Erb, Nevin's Classroom Lectures, pp. 148-151.

[648] Schaff, "Modern Christianity." In History of the Christian Church. Rev. ed. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1888. Vol. VI, pp. 38-39.

depreciation of the word itself.[649] A year later, in 1962, Howard G. Hageman, a staunch supporter of the Mercersburg tradition among the Dutch Reformed congregations in America, allowed that Mercersburg

> had not recovered the Reformation idea of the Word itself mediating the presence of Christ, which was such an important element in early Reformed liturgies.[650]

In 1963 Bard Thompson published an article which recognized the validity of this criticism. Yet while he observed the obvious lacuna of the preached word in the Mercersburg formulation, he also pointed out that a high teaching of the preached word is "virtually demanded" by the Mercersburg objective.[651]

Nichols had repeated his criticism in 1962 when he declared that as an essentially eucharistic movement, Mercersburg mirrored the Oxford movement and the high-church Lutherans in their deemphasis of the word.[652]

Finally, in 1978 Brian Gerrish, acknowledging Nevin's dependence on Calvin in his doctrine of the Supper, also recognized Nevin's independence and departure from Calvin and the Reformed tradition in his deemphasis of the sacrament of the word. Yet Gerrish is struck by an interesting point. Unlike many of Nevin's Protestant contemporaries, the issue for him is not so much the importance of the preached word for the life of Protestant congregations. Here Mercersburg certainly assumed the essential role of

[649] Nichols, Romanticism, p. 105.

[650] Howard G. Hageman, Pulpit and Table (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1962), p. 97.

[651] Thompson, "Catechism," p. 71.

[652] Nichols, Mercersburg, p. 13.

preaching, but sought to resist its taking over the entire Protestant service (a problem which is evident in the descriptions of many Protestant services of that time).[653] Furthermore the absence of substantial criticism on that score by the contemporaries of Mercersburg would indicate that Mercersburg was not perceived as sacrificing the sermon for the sake of the Eucharist. Rather, as Gerrish points out, the issue for modern students of Mercersburg is their silence on Calvin's elevation of the word in his use of "the 'eucharistic' language of a real presence even when speaking of the oral proclamation of the gospel." Certainly Hodge, who in spite of sharing with revivalists a high view of the place of the sermon in worship was a cautious critic of the revival methods, would have cringed at this. First, at using eucharistic language in referring to the presentation of the word. And secondly, at the suggestion that such language was used by Calvin. Mercersburg, on the other hand, would have found the connection most appropriate. We can only wonder at Mercersburg's silence.

[653] Maxwell, Worship. Preoccupation with the sermon is charmingly characterized by Maxwell (p. 99). "The service begins, according to A.R. Kremer in his description of an often repeated Sunday evening in an American Protestant parish, with the preliminary exercises: a devotional hymn, reading of Scripture, prayer, and perhaps another hymn. These exercises were designed both to prepare the people for the noted evangelist and to heighten their anticipation of his arrival. 'As the last lines of the hymn are reached, the great man leaps upon the platform, scans his audience, looks pleased, steps to the front, and reads his text.' Where had he been during the 'preliminaries'? Sequestered in a room behind the platform, 'gathering himself up, getting in mental trim, keeping himself fresh for the evening's effort, and letting the small fry (the D.D.'s and other clergy) attend to the hymns and prayers'. The evangelist's absence before the sermon created the impression that 'the devotional part of the service is more ornamental than useful, a sort of fringe or red tape to the sermon . . . .'" In A.R. Kremer, A Biographical Sketch of John Williamson Nevin (Reading, Pa.: Daniel Miller, 1890), pp. 58-63.

ANXIOUS BENCH

The controversy that led Nevin to abandon his "Puritanism" and embrace catholic evangelicalism, with its emphasis on the Church, has been generally reported to have been the "Anxious Bench" controversy. It began with Nevin's 1843 publication of a tract called "The Anxious Bench" which attacked the popular revivalistic measures and system of Charles Finney and his supporters.

Good reported the events that led to Nevin's tract. After attending the Reverend Mr. Ramsey's sermon and service of confirmation in Mercersburg (1842), Nevin made public his criticism of Ramsey's introduction of the "anxious bench" and his call "for persons to come forward to it . . . . " As a result Nevin was petitioned by several students asking him "to recall what he had said about the anxious bench." Good states that it was this criticism, along with Nevin's criticism of the Reverend Mr. Winebrenner (a secessionist from the GRC and the founder of the Church of God) that led to Nevin's decision concerning the ultimately negative and disruptive effect of revivialism and his authorship of "The Anxious Bench."[654]

In Appel's description of the controversy he concluded that the Ramsey incident ended Nevin's "crooked halting" between the Reformed faith and Puritanism.[655]

We have mentioned Nichols agreement with this conclusion. Nichols believes that Nevin's brush with revivalism initiated the sacramental and

[654] Good, History, p. 143. Others report it was a Sunday morning service, in Appel, Recollections, p. 317 and Maxwell, Worship, p. 18. An excellent summary of the Winebrenner controversy is found in The New Mercersburg Review. Charles Yrigoyen Jr., "John Williamson Nevin's The Anxious Bench and Evangelical Piety," 1, Autumn (1985), pp. 8-10.

[655] Appel, The Life, pp. 157-161.

churchly "reorientation" which sparked his reaction.[656]

Finally Nevin himself wrote Harbaugh telling him that the Mercersburg system "commenced with the publication in 1843 of the Anxious Bench."[657] But Nichols makes it very clear that this reorientation had been in the making during Nevin's stay in Pittsburgh, a conclusion drawn earlier by Good.

Good maintained that though Nevin, in 1843, had not undergone the change which the publication of the Principle of Protestantism would bring, he had been undergoing a philosophic and theological transformation even prior to 1843. He contended that Nevin was beginning to become fascinated with the "figure of organism." He was already caught up in emphasizing universals, placing "humanity in general" above the "particular." His parallel between the first and second Adam had begun to appear. Also Nevin was beginning to imply that Christ's generic life is the root of the Church. But, contended Good, Nevin had not yet made the "objective force of the church" and the sacraments the source of this generic life. At this point Nevin still believed that this was the exclusive work of the Holy Spirit.[658]

The popularity of revivalism in America was the single most important factor in making "The Anxious Bench" a controversial work. The revival spirit was popular in virtually all of the Protestant denominations.[659] Appel reported that revivalism had captured the hearts of the Presbyterian "New School" camp and equally it had divided the Lutherans. In the GRC the

[656] Nichols, "Nevin," pp. 72-73.

[657] Nevin, "Letter," p. 1.

[658] Good, History, pp. 145-146.

[659] Richards, "Mercersburg Considered," p. 139.

majority of the Ohio Synod churches had turned to the "New Measures." Two of the GRC's more influential churches, Race Street, Philadelphia and Germantown, Pennsylvania were involved in revivalistic practices.

Indeed, in 1828 Charles Finney had himself led a revival at the Race Street church and was subsequently issued but declined a call. In 1837 Race Street found their revivalistic minister when they installed the future fierce opponent of Nevin, the Reverend Joseph Berg.

Berg's success at Race Street has been attributed to "his adoption of the 'new measures' used by Finney a decade before." Berg stirred the church with a revivalistic "season" which lasted until the publication of "The Anxious Bench".[660]

Berg, like Finney, stressed conviction of sin and the need for repentance. Yet, unlike Finney, Berg would not allow that the individual could contribute to his own salvation (Finney's Arminianism). Instead Berg retained Calvinism's insistence on the utter depravity of human nature and the doctrine of election. Berg also emphasized the use of the Heidelberg Catechism. Yet while Berg avoided Finney's Arminian theology, he did adopt Finney's techniques in bringing individuals to a conviction of sin and ultimately to conversion.[661]

But the real leader of the pro-revivalist forces within the GRC was Jacob Helfenstein, minister of the Germantown congregation. Helfenstein had raised the GRC's reaction to his techniques by elevating the role of profession of faith and regeneration over that of the Catechism. Opposition to this came in the form of antagonism between Mercersburg Classis and the

[660] Donald E. Harpster, "Controversy in the German Reformed Church in Pennsylvania With Emphasis On Nineteenth-Century Philadelphia." Diss. The Pennsylvania State University 1976.

[661] Harpster, "Controversy," pp. 78-79.

Classis of East Pennsylvania. The leader of the forces of opposition was John W. Nevin. The majority of the GRC ministers aligned themselves with the Mercersburg Classis.[662]

Even Berg, to some extent, was opposed to the excesses of revivalistic measures. Yet it is evident that after the publication of "The Anxious Bench" revivals became less frequent in the GRC and this was a key source of Berg's complaint.[663]

As with so many other controversial issues surrounding Mercersburg, the issue of revivalism had some early source in Rauch. Nevin reported that Rauch had an aversion to "feeling" religion and the subjective quality of the "current forms" of religious expression. Furthermore, Rauch openly expressed his "disaffection to revivals."[664]

Equally, Philip Schaff was an open critic of revivalism. But his criticism usually centered in the broader problem of American religious orthodoxy's penchant to divide itself. According to Nichols, Mercersburg first focused on revivalism and later on what they believed was the more important while related issue of "sectarian anarchy." Both Nevin and Schaff believed the source of the problem to be America's lack of an historical consciousness.[665] However it must be noted that Nevin had focused on the problem of "sect" and Protestant orthodoxy's blindness to its catholic principles three years earlier in his "Party Spirit."[666]

Schaff's attack on the sectarian tendency in America took the form of

[662] Harpster, "Controversy," pp. 83-87.

[663] Harpster, "Controversy," p. 88.

[664] Nevin, "Eulogy (1859)," pp. 17-19.

[665] Nichols, Mercersburg, p. 17.

[666] Nevin, "Party Spirit," pp. 21-24.

criticism of the reigning system of Puritanism. In an article which was meant to be a reply to the religious periodical the New England Puritan Schaff criticised the Puritan system for its one-sided orientation towards religious subjectivism and individualism, its sober, cool rationalism, its lack of a deeper sense of religious life, and absence of an understanding of history. In short, wrote Schaff, Puritanism is extreme, unhistorical, unchurchly and unsacramental Protestantism.[667]

A year later Schaff again criticised the Puritan system, this time addressing what he identified as their rationalistic tendency. Schaff took up the cudgels for Nevin, condemning the writers of the Puritan Recorder for their ignorance of German theology and their trite criticism of the GRC's "dead formalism" and absence of a "born again" experience.[668]

That year Schaff wrote an article in the Mercersburg Review on the Church's first Pentecost with special attention to speaking in tongues and the related emotionalism surrounding such practices.

Schaff's article did not demean the New Testament experience of glossolalia. Indeed he called it a heightened level of devotion in which, while the individual is not mystically transferred to a higher subjective sphere, he does find himself in felt contact with the divine mind. This, declared Schaff, is altogether different from individualistic ecstasy. Rather it is the exercise of the natural inward capacity ("the high intuitional faculty") to experience contact with God through the mediation of the Holy Spirit.[669]

[667] Schaff, "Puritanismus," p. 121.

[668] Philipp Schaff, "Der Puritan Recorder," Der Deutsch Kirchenfreund, 3 (1850), p. 414.

[669] Philip Schaff, "The Birth Day of the Church," Mercersburg Review, 2 (1850), p. 375.

In contrast to modern exhibitions of ecstatic experience in religious worship Schaff concludes:

> If we leave out of view the sporadic and occasional appearances of modern times concerning which it may with propriety be asked whether they proceed from the operation of the Holy Spirit, or of an unusually excited nature that delights to revel in exhibitions of a sickely sentimental fanaticism of feeling, we may safely affirm that since the third century the gift of speaking in tongues has utterly vanished.[670]

Again, it was the tendency of Mercersburg to identify the subjective or sectarian idea as a principle of the Puritan system. Therefore, while it may have been true that some Congregational churches had no interest in revivalism or in tongues speaking, Mercersburg believed the latent tendency could not be denied and existed within the system's very constitution. Thus the more extreme examples of emotional upheaval at religious services were still seen as an effect of the popularity of the Puritan theory even if the revivals themselves claimed no denominational allegiance or even if they claimed an allegiance which was not "Puritan," as in the examples of revivals within the GRC itself.

Schaff had arrived in Mercersburg shortly after Nevin had published "The Anxious Bench." The principles and criticism contained in it became a source of solidarity between the two. By this time Nevin had already embraced enough of the German speculative learning to identify the "New Measures" revivalism as a theological system and not merely a divinely sponsored correction of orthodoxy's so called "dead formalism." Thus the tract sought to identify the forces or principles within the system which

[670] Schaff, "Birth Day," pp. 373-374. Schaff is directly addressing the practices of the Catholic and Apostolic Church. Yet his thinking here includes all religious services which he believed were excessively emotional for the sake of emotion itself.

he believed disrupted the proper course of Protestant orthodoxy. For Nevin the "Anxious Bench" was merely the symbol, form or "shape" taken by the heretical theology of the practitioners of revivalism.

Nevin made it clear that initially he found the direction of the idea behind the system to be correct in its addressing the problem of "dead formalism." Furthermore, the idea was laudable in its early resistance to the divisive characteristic of the spirit of sect. Yet the original idea had wandered into the excesses which resulted in a heretical and independent system.[671]

Embroiled in the Pelagian form of New England congregationalism as developed by Dwight, Taylor and then Finney, Nevin believed that revivalism's Arminian subjectivism transformed the true character of salvation by making justification a feeling rather than an actual fact of religious faith. In effect, God does not encounter the individual. The individual encounters God. The result is that religion is a purely personal matter having its life entirely within the individual himself.[672] Thus New Measures creates an imbalance on the side of subjectivity. Religious life is lived entirely within personal experience. The effect is a fantasy life and experience. And while feeling is a natural part of religion, it cannot be the end of religion. Such emotional individualism works directly against the corporate catechetical and objective aspect of religion. In this New Measures is at "war" with confessional Christianity. Because personal experience is all in all, the creeds and confessions including the

[671] John W. Nevin, "The Anxious Bench," in Catholic and Reformed: Selected Theological Writings of John Williamson Nevin, ed. Charles Yrigoyen and George Bricker (Pittsburgh: The Pickwick Press, 1978), pp. 17-21.

[672] Nevin, "Bench," pp. 97-100.

Heidelberg Catechism cannot be authoritative nor can their life become the vehicle of salvation.[673]

Most likely the moderates at Princeton would have applauded Nevin's argument to this point. And Nevin undoubtedly assumed their support. But what followed in "The Anxious Bench" must have been a harder pill for them to swallow. Nevin proceeded to develop the concept of the Church as not only the proper source of Christian nurture, but the only way by which the individual experiences Christ.

Nevin concludes that the confessional life is none other than the life of Christ in churchly and organic unity with the individual. The individual feelings which come from a living being, grafted into this objective, corporate existence are merely aspects of a developing personality. Such a personality will evolve as it is being continually sanctified until the final hour of resurrection. At that time the individual life will stop its transformation and become what it will always be.[674]

Personal feelings alone cannot grasp the infinite depth of religious life. As long as personal feelings dictate one's religious life, sin will consistently be identified with willful disobedience and the process of sanctification will be replaced by a system of casuistry. Only as the subject understands himself in the objective sense as species, that is a fallen race, will he recognize his nature as constituted in sin. Sin is not a battle of individual passions versus personal piety and restraint, but the fallen condition which is recognized from within the Faith's confessional structure. From that structure all of life can be addressed.

[673] Nevin, "Bench," pp. 99-101.

[674] Nevin, "Bench," pp. 107-108.

That structure is found only in the institutional Church.[675]

The response to "The Anxious Bench" drew the battle lines between the Mercersburg camp and those who would question Nevin's all-out attack on Puritanism. The Messenger received the treatise with praise, citing favorable reviews from the Christian Intelligencer and the Lutheran Standard.[676] The influential Dutch Reformed lawyer and educator, Taylor Lewis, also congratulated Nevin on an orthodox reply to the New Measures revivalism. And following the publication of "The Anxious Bench" there was a noticeable cooling of the Messenger's prior support of local revivals.

Yet the pages of the Messenger were not free of criticism. The November 9, 1843 issue included the letter of Jacob Helfenstein (signed J.H.) which complained of Nevin's attack on revivals. The following year, no doubt after receiving several criticisms of his letter and a great deal of support of Nevin's treatise, Helfenstein wrote again, this time acknowledging some of the points made by Nevin and maintaining that he sought merely to save the "New Measures" for use and not for abuse in the denomination. Yet he complained bitterly that "we cannot but regard many of its ["The Anxious Bench"] positions as altogether untenable, and its general tendency decidedly pernicious." He continued to lament that just when the GRC was beginning to come alive again, thanks to the "New Measures," Nevin seeks to restrain the movement of the Spirit. Helfenstein concluded by suggesting that Nevin is so uninformed on the subject of

[675] Nevin, "Bench," pp. 108-111. Nevin elaborated on the conclusions of his Anxious Bench in, "The Sect System," Mercersburg Review, 1 (1848).

[676] Weekly Messenger of the German Reformed Church, November 1, 1843.

revivals as to confuse the Methodist's "Mourner's Bench" with the more familiar "Anxious Seat." There is, according to J.H., no such thing as an "Anxious Bench."[677]

The Lutheran Observer was also quick to continue the feud and attack "the Anxious Bench." But the most interesting response came in the form of an unsigned review in the pages of the Princeton Review. It was probably written by Hodge. It seems the author was in general agreement with Nevin and writes, "In the main argument of this pamphlet, Dr. Nevin has our hearty concurrence." He affirmed that the "Anxious Bench" has no place in the life of the Church. But where the reviewer differs with Nevin he lapses into a skeptical silence. It must have been due to his questions over Nevin's arguments on the nature and life of the Church. This would become the major source of contention between Hodge and Nevin in later years.[678]

In the years that followed the publication of "The Anxious Bench" Princeton would feel certain enough of Nevin's position to make clear their rejection of the Mercersburg theology. But at this early stage it is likely that they simply did not know where Nevin stood. However, they believed him to be an ally. But once they realized that Nevin had experienced a philosophic conversion to German Idealism they identified him with the pantheism they suspected of virtually all of German idealistic theology.

That conversion was clearly seen by Princeton as a rejection of the common sense position which more and more was being adapted and allowed to inform the Princeton theology. And it was effectively the same philosophic

[677] Messenger, 9 (1843), p. 1713.

[678] Charles Hodge, ed., rev. of The Anxious Bench, by John W. Nevin, Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review, 16 (1844), p. 137.

base which supported nineteenth-century evangelicalism. Indeed, Mark Noll has recently argued that the Mercersburg attack on American evangelicalism was not based on "a Reformed analysis of culture," so much as an outright rejection of the philosophic position of evangelicalism's intellectual base. And he identifies the proponents of this position as the "Common Sense Realists."[679]

CRITICISM FROM PURITANISTIC PERIODICALS

Two vocal representatives of that realist-informed, common sense evangelicalism and strong critics of the Mercersburg theology were the Lutheran Observer and the Puritan Recorder. While they certainly were not the only proponents of nineteenth-century evangelicalism and the accompanying New Measures revivalism, they were the periodicals which prompted a protracted controversy with the Messenger, the Kirchenfreund, and the Mercersburg Review. In their preemptory reaction to the Mercersburg theology they established themselves as spokesmen for American orthodoxy's antisacramental, "Puritan" defense of a low-church position against Mercersburg's sacramentalism.

Mercersburg was fully aware that they held the minority position. They recognized that nearly all of American Protestantism had gravitated toward what they believed was the rationalistic model. As Nichols observes, eastern Lutheranism "had wholly abandoned Luther for Zwingli, and from that position was attacking Calvinism as papist." As for the Reformed, they were only slightly less rationalistic than the Lutherans. Naturally the Baptists were "unsacramental on principle." And the Methodists effectively shared the Baptist's position which had embraced the principle of revivalism as the

[679] Mark Noll, "What Has Wheaton to do with Jerusalem: Lesson from Evangelicals for the Reformed," Reformed Journal, 32, No. 5 (1982), p. 14.

heart of their theology.[680]

As we have previously noted, it was Rauch who first roused the ire of the German bretheren. His implication that Lutherans had once held to the material presence was more than one contributor to the Observer could take. This writer's denouncement of such papal deviltry spilled over into a venomous attack of the author of "German Characteristics."[681]

Trouble with the Lutheran community continued to plague the Mercersburg camp. In 1843, while Nevin was already embroiled in an hostile exchange with Winebrenner, he was sharply criticised in a letter to the Lutherische Kirchenzeitung for allegedly implying in a lecture that Germans are inferior people. The Messenger asked both privately and in print that the author, Frederick Schmidt, retract the slanderous statements made against Nevin. When no retraction was forthcoming the Messenger severed all relations with the Kirchenzeitung.[682]

From November to December of that year the Messenger reported favorable reviews of "The Anxious Bench" from a majority of religious periodicals. An exception was the review in the Lutheran Observer. Following the Observer's negative review the editors of the Messenger printed their response to Kurtz (Rauch's old Lutheran adversary) maintaining that Kurtz had completely mishandled the content of Nevin's

[680] Nichols, Mercersburg, pp. 198-199. Nichols is fully aware of the exception to this generalization. The work and influence of Krauth who was a sacramental Lutheran was beginning to be felt in the Lutheran denomination. Krauth was an evangelical who benefited from the Mercersburg theology and liturgical revival.

[681] Rauch, "German Characteristics," Nos. 30 & 35.

[682] "A Gross Calumy [sic]," Weekly Messenger of the German Reformed Church, 8 (New Series), No. 48 (1843), pp. 1648-1649.

treatise.[683]

The feud between the Observer's Kurtz and Nevin continued into the late part of the 1840's. In 1848 Nevin wrote a devastating criticism aimed at Kurtz and the Observer entitled, "Pseudo Lutheranism." Here Nevin identified the low-church American Lutherans with rationalism and grouped them together with the majority of the American evangelical practitioners of an essentially Puritan theology.[684]

The following year Nevin published "The Lutheran Confession." In this article Nevin argued that the American low-church Lutherans had rejected their true European tradition. However, he was also strong to point out that the GRC had never accepted Luther's insistence on the material presence. He argued that the GRC's distinction from Lutherans is clearly identifiable in the Heidelberg Catechism.[685]

The same year Nevin produced an article which summarized his position in the controversy which had been going on between Mercersburg and the Puritan Recorder for some years. In "Puritanism and the Creed" Nevin reaffirmed his earlier remarks made about Puritanism and their rejection of the Apostles' Creed. He noted the Recorder's judgment of him as an enemy of true religion, and he concluded that as an appeal to private judgment disguised as an appeal to Scripture alone, Puritanism was tritely regional: a temporary American religious phenomenon doomed to pass away.[686]

[683] Messenger, Dec. 20, 1843.

[684] John W. Nevin, "Pseudo Lutheranism," Weekly Messenger of the German Reformed Church, 13 (New Series), No. 27 (1848).

[685] John W. Nevin, "The Lutheran Confession," Mercersburg Review, 1 (1849), p. 470.

[686] John W. Nevin, "Puritanism and the Creed," Mercersburg Review, 1 (1849), pp. 596-598.

Schaff was also actively involved in the controversy with the Observer and the Recorder as is evident from his articles in the Kirchenfreund. In 1850 he reprinted a review which was meant to describe the vindication of his colleague Nevin. This vindication had come with the publication of Ebrard's review of the Mystical Presence. Schaff claimed that the Observer had argued that Nevin misrepresented the sacramental position of the Lutheran Church. Yet Schaff testified to the historical accuracy of the Mystical Presence by reprinting Ebrard's review which had been previously published in Germany in Studien und Kritiken (1850).

The article acknowledged and applauded Nevin's recognition of the centrality of Christ's real union with the believer in the Lord's Supper as being "basically the Melancthonian interpretation" (also im Wesentlichen die melancthonische Auffassung).[687]

Ebrard found it strange that the American Lutherans, as represented by the Lutheran Observer, preferred the Zwinglian interpretation. It also came as a surprise that they considered Nevin a crypto-Roman. The Observer's charge that Nevin's interpretation is "mystical, confused, unspiritual (fleischliche)" and an "obsolete doctrine" of "concorporation" is manifestly incorrect. Indeed, Ebrard writes that Nevin has accurately described the true development of the Melancthonian-Calvinistic sacramental doctrine by means of the proper use of "German science." Furthermore, Ebrard believed that Nevin and he had made these discoveries working fairly independently, using similar scientific methods. Thus, he concluded, there is all the more reason to recognize that their findings are not merely "an accidental, subjective opinion" (eine zufallige subjective Meinung); but

[687] Philip Schaf, "Dr. Nevin's Abendmahlslehre," Der Deutsche Kirchenfreund, 3 (1850), p. 204.

that their efforts represent the treating of the subject in an objective and truly scientific manner.[688]

The hostilities between the low-church Lutherans and Mercersburg were never really settled and eventually died a natural death long after the Mercersburg controversy had subsided. Even as late as 1874 the Lutherans published a review of Schneck's attack of Mercersburg. The reason for the publication may have been that churchly Lutheranism as defended by Krauth was threatening the low-church position to the degree that the Quarterly Review of the Evangelical Lutheran Church sought to denounce Mercersburg and with it Mercersburg's influence on Krauth (although Krauth is not mentioned by name). The Quarterly Review's technique was to publish the review of the former editor of the Messenger and defector from the Mercersburg camp, B.S. Schneck, whom they described as someone who should know the errors contained in the Mercersburg apostacy.[689]

The substance of the Quarterly Review's criticism is that Mercersburg is in sympathy with Rome. And the review culminates in what suggests that this article was meant to be read by those who might be influenced by Krauth. The warning goes out to those "High Church Lutherans" who find their sympathies with Mercersburg, that such practices are not truly Lutheran at all, but an imported brand of false religion. The article concludes with several "signs" meant to alert the reader to the ideas of Mercersburg and high-church Lutheranism. The writer says that this movement is modern, it stresses the visible church, it identifies the ministry and

[688] Schaf, "Dr. Nevin," pp. 204-206.

[689] Rev. of Mercersburg Theology Inconsistent With Protestant and Reformed Doctrine by B.S. Schneck, Quarterly Review of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, 4 (New Series), 1874, and "An Explanation," p. 252.

priesthood together, it holds confession and absolution in high regard, along with the sacraments, and it condemns "New Measures."[690]

Once again, the battle line is clearly drawn between New Measures revivalism and the churchly, sacramental theology of orthodox Reformed and Lutheran practice.

PRINCIPLE OF PROTESTANTISM

"The Anxious Bench" cast Nevin in the role of an opponent of New Measures revivalism. But even after its publication Nevin's revivalistic antagonists in the GRC did not recognize him as a sacramentalist, but merely an unconverted supporter of the Old School program who had an exaggerated fear of the occasional excesses at revival meetings. That perception began to change with the publication of his sermon on "Catholic Unity."

Nevin preached his sermon on unity at the Triennial Convention of the Dutch and German Reformed Churches in Harrisburg in 1844. It contains the same strong identification of the Church as the true source of Christ's life and grace that is found in "The Anxious Bench". Yet here Nevin presents his case more clearly and concisely and little doubt is left as to Nevin's direction towards catholicity. However, it is curious to note that although Nevin reported that his sermon on unity was "sanctioned by the full approbation of the worthy representatives of both Churches at the time" (that is, the GRC and the Dutch Reformed church), he felt that this homily launched Mercersburg into its second controversial stage. The reason why he saw it as a major statement even though its ideas caused no storm, may be the lag in reaction to the sermon which, while negligible after its delivery, was severe after its publication as an appendix to Schaff's

[690] Rev. of Mercersburg, pp. 255-447.

Principle Of Protestantism (1845). The reaction came when the sermon was identified with the controversial position of Schaff's book.[691]

Nevin stated that the sermon had stirred some early antagonism which developed around its position of "mystical union" as this concept opposed the "sect system." The critical faction began identifying Mercersburg's concept of mystical union as a new and "dangerous tendency." Yet whatever alarm had developed from "Catholic Unity" it was certainly intensified by Schaff's Principle of Protestantism. Nevin considered Schaff's work to be the third stage of the Mercersburg system.[692]

The author of the Principle of Protestantism was the GRC's second choice of a German professor to teach at the seminary in Mercersburg. The Messenger reported that in 1842 its editor B.S. Schneck (the later critic of Mercersburg and ironically the future pastor of the Race Street church) had recommended that the Reverend Dr. Krummacher be brought from Elberfeld in Germany as a minister who could aid Nevin in the preparation of pastors desperately needed in the expanding Ohio churches. News of Krummacher's refusal was reported in the Lutheran Observer late in 1843. A month later the Messenger reported that Dr. Philip Schaff had been nominated by the GRC Synod. Schaff's acceptance of the call was recorded in the March, 1844 issue and news of his ordination and attendance at the Triennial appeared in the September 4, 1844 issue.[693]

Initially Joseph Berg was in favor of Schaff's call. That lasted only until he heard Schaff's inaugural address on the "Principle of

[691] Nevin, "Letter," p. 1.

[692] Nevin, "Letter," p. 1.

[693] Messenger, Nov. 30, 1842, Feb. 8, 1843, March 6, 1844, and Sept. 4, 1844.

Protestantism," in Reading, Pa. in 1844 (of which Schaff's book became an expansion and elaboration). It was then that Berg became infuriated by the direct rejection of his own popular theory of Protestant history which held that a true Protestant apostolic succession continued through the Waldensian church.[694]

Schaff's theory held that Protestantism's roots remain firmly grounded in Roman Catholic history and that while Rome's errors should not be mitigated, she is certainly not to be identified with the antichrist.[695]

Berg called Schaff's theory "sentimental semi-apologies for the fooleries of papal idolatry," and with the support of his congregation, instigated two informal hearings against Schaff. The first was by Philadelphia Classis. It was determined that the teachings of Schaff and Nevin were contrary to Scripture. In addition the classis charged that their teachings were guilty of "inculcating dangerous and Romanistic errors." The man presiding over this hearing was Jacob Helfenstein.[696]

That year, 1845, the classis took its complaint to the Synod at York, Pa. The complaint was handed to a committee for study. They returned it saying they found nothing to support the complaint. Furthermore, the committee reprimanded the classis for a breach of procedure, which required that the complaint go first through the Board of Visitors of the Seminary. Yet because of the seriousness of the charges open debate broke out on the floor of Synod. The result was the complete exoneration of Schaff and Nevin by the Synod.[697]

[694] Harpster, "Controversy," p. 110.

[695] Harpster, p. 111.

[696] Harpster, pp. 111-114.

[697] Harpster, pp. 115-116.

One year later, in protest of the Synod's decision, Philadelphia Classis issued new charges against Schaff's Principle of Protestantism and against his summarily written, What Is Church History?. The charges were reviewed by the Board of Visitors of the Seminary. Their decision was that the charges were not worthy of consideration by the Synod. Yet in spite of this decision the Race Street group met privately to denounce the Mercersburg theology as promoting Roman Catholic practice. In 1847 Helfenstein and Berg made a final appeal to the Board of Visitors of the Seminary. Again the board refused to consider the matter.[698]

James Good reported that the decision of the Synod to reject the complaint of Philadelphia Classis gave strength and momentum to the Mercersburg Movement. Although the investigative committee spent four days reviewing the Principle of Protestantism before concluding that it was consistent with German Reformed tradition and that it would be in the denomination's best interest that "the professors of the seminary receive the support and confidence of the Church," Good concluded that with the publication and subsequent vindication of the Principle of Protestantism, along with the later publication of Nevin's Mystical Presence, Mercersburg launched an unorthodox offensive against the denomination on two fronts, one historical and the other doctrinal.[699]

For Good the offensive was meant to foist Mercersburg's new German ideas on the denomination. For Mercersburg the hope was to reintroduce the denomination to its forgotten catholic tradition in a system of principles presented in terms of modern experience. Yet Schaff and Nevin knew that

[698] Harpster, "Controversy," pp. 116-118.

[699] Good, History, pp. 227-231.

their system required a reorientation in both the philosophical and theological thinking of American evangelicals.

Unfortunately for Mercersburg there were those like Berg, Helfenstein and later Good, who suspected that that reorientation was simply a reorientation towards Rome. Given the strong anti-Roman climate in the Protestant denominations, this accusation carried enormous weight in drawing suspicion to the Mercersburg Movement, especially when the age's self-proclaimed pillar of orthodoxy, Charles Hodge, joined in the chorus which warned of Mercersburg's Roman direction.

Hodge reviewed the Principle of Protestantism in 1845. It was he who initiated the virulent and unsatisfiable criticism that the Mercersburg writings were incomprehensible to the English speaking person. Hodge, almost mockingly, claimed that this criticism was especially true where Nevin tried to express himself in Germanic forms of thought. All of this, says Hodge, ultimately derives from the natural obscurity of the German mind.[700]

In spite of Hodge's intolerance of all things German and his admitted confusion about the philosophical foundation upon which Mercersburg rested, his greatest problem was with Mercersburg's definition of the Church which Hodge suspected was heavily influenced by Pusey. So, for Hodge, it was actually an English development that had landed Nevin and Schaff far from the true idea of the Church. The effect of that English influence was clear in what Hodge judged was the Principle of Protestantism's most critical failure; ignoring the principle of justification by faith. Indeed, Hodge

[700] Charles Hodge, "Schaf's Protestantism," rev. of Principle of Protestantism As Related to the Present State of the Church, by Philip Schaf, Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review, 17 (1845), p. 626.

concludes that the Mercersburgers have "apparently" denied the subject altogether.[701]

In contrast to Mercersburg's view, which Hodge claims stresses the visible quality of the Church, Hodge argues that authentic Protestantism recognizes the Church as completely distinct from that body of doctrine and individuals, many of whom are "unsanctified," who openly profess the Christian religion. Rather, he identifies a sublime fellowship of "true believers" as the true Church.[702]

Furthermore, Hodge resented what he believed was the absurd notion that American Reformed religious practice and theory was subverted by Puritanistic practice and theory. While he refrained from stating his defense, he did suggest that most American Reformed people would find this accusation unacceptable. All of this pointed to what Hodge described as Mercersburg's softness on Romanism. Their identification of the menace of American Protestantism in "Rationalism and Sectarianism" missed, in typical German style, the real menace of Rome. Hodge wrote, ". . . we consider Romanism immeasurably more dangerous than infidelity." And he qualified his statement by adding that the reason for this was that "false religion is more likely to spread than mere irreligion; and that the human mind has greater affinity for superstition, than for infidelity."[703]

Schaff's misperception of the true nature and unity of the Church, says Hodge, is in part due to his understanding of "Sectarism." Schaff's preoccupation with physical unity has blinded him to the real unity

[701] Hodge, "Schaf's Protestantism," pp. 626-629.

[702] Hodge, "Schaf's Protestantism," pp. 629-630.

[703] Hodge, "Schaf's Protestantism," p. 630.

experienced by America's Protestant denominations. Hodge wrote:

> There is therefore more real unity, more real brotherhood existing between the evangelical denominations in America, than is to be found in the church of Rome, the church of England, or in the Reformed or Lutheran church of Germany.[704]

Historically speaking, the obvious impediment between the two is German Idealism's concept of organic development. Hodge is not in total disagreement with it. He simply confesses his being confused by it, especially where he can discern no certain vision of the future. And he concludes that its utter reliance on German philosophy and theology, notorious for denying a personal God, sin and the immortality of the human soul, must remain a source of deep suspicion for the American churches.

Joseph Berg's review is less astute, but more caustic. He seeks to refute Schaff at every level. His article, "Mercersburg Theology," was printed in the Protestant Quarterly Review the year he took over editorship from R.W. Griswold. The Protestant Quarterly was primarily an anti-Roman Catholic periodical and its character remained unchanged during Berg's editorship. But now it added Mercersburg as a source of criticism of the growing influence of Rome. Berg's article began ostensibly as a discussion of sacramental union with Christ. But it becomes immediately apparent that its real purpose is the refutation of Schaff's sacramental ideas in the

[704] Hodge, "Schaf's Protestantism," p. 631. It is clear from this that Hodge has either misunderstood or ignored Schaff's concept of "organic unity" as presented in the Principle of Protestantism. Organic unity includes the inward and outward dialectic as an identity of essence and substance. For Hodge denominational differences in America are minimal compared to an evangelical spirit which for him unifies most American Protestants. Mercersburg would regard that spirit as merely the wholesale acceptance of Puritan religious values and practices. Yet Hodge's defense of the denominational system eventually finds Schaff shifting his position to one of sympathy with American denominationalism, at least as far as to appreciate what Schaff believed were its strengths.

Principle of Protestantism.[705]

Berg employed the popular tool of direct reference to Scriptural texts to reject what he calls Schaff's theory of "concorporation." Says Berg, Schaff would have us accept that the believer's union with Christ is physical as well as spiritual. Berg replies that such Romish superstition is completely foreign to true Protestants. The union which can make Christendom one again is purely spiritual and can occur only as every faction accepts Scripture as their only rule.[706]

Yet this union is hampered by the outright rejection of this rule by the "most odious system of error and superstition which has ever afflicted the world," that is, Rome. Says Berg, Rome's rejection of the primary place of Scripture and its replacement of Scripture in favor of its own doctrine of tradition was inadvertantly sanctioned by the GRC Synod when it recommended the Principle of Protestantism to the denomination. In this the GRC has approved a book which "makes the church, and not the Bible, the final judge of controversies." Thus it makes the church "infallible." However, he concludes, the shortsightedness of many of the denominational leaders is due to their confusion over the book and because of this they have not recognized the book's clear deviation from "the fundamental principle of protestantism" (which he recognizes is justification by faith, and the rule of Scripture alone).[707]

Berg continued his criticism of the Principle of Protestantism even as

[705] Joseph Berg, "Mercersburg Theology," Protestant Quarterly Review, 3, No. 1 (1846), pp. 75-77. Berg's first open criticism appeared in the Messenger, No. 9 (1843). It demonstrates that there were early tensions between Berg and Mercersburg.

[706] Berg, "Mercersburg," pp. 76-82.

[707] Berg, "Mercersburg," pp. 80-86.

he reviewed Nevin's Mystical Presence a year later. While he criticised Nevin's position in the Mystical Presence, and suspected Nevin's Roman direction, it was Schaff whom he remembered bitterly for his public rejection of the popular theory that Protestantism was preserved through the medieval Waldensian church. In this review of Nevin's work titled, "The German Controversy," Berg is venomous in suggesting doubts about Schaff's orthodoxy as it was debated in reference to Schaff's youthful publication of "Sin Against the Holy Spirit." For Berg, Schaff was hopelessly mired in the "vain babblings" of Hegel's speculations. Hegel, he concluded, was a pantheist. And the whole of German philosophy is unfit for an "evangelical mind."[708]

In 1846 Berg reviewed Schaff's What Is Church History?. While the review is unsigned, it does come from the Protestant Quarterly and demonstrates the editor's disdain not only for the theory behind the history, but for the author as well. The writer complains that he has had quite enough of Schaff's theory of historical development, so much indeed "to convince us, that the author's mind is deplorably warped by vain speculations, which we regard with feelings of deep aversion and distrust." He concludes, "The idea of 'development' as maintained by the author of this book, we believe to be pernicious and false."[709]

Samuel Helfenstein was allied to Berg in his crusade against Mercersburg. Helfenstein was given leave in the Protestant Quarterly to expose what the antagonists believed was Mercersburg's elevation of

[708] Joseph Berg, "The German Controversy," Protestant Quarterly Review, 3, No. 4 (1846), pp. 306-307.

[709] Joseph Berg, ed., rev. of What Is Church History, by Philip Schaf, Protestant Quarterly Review, 3, No. 4 (1846), pp. 385-386.

tradition over Scripture. Yet, the criticisms of Scriptural misuse and of the use of the "vain speculations" of German philosophy, which he claimed Dugald Stewart had effectively dismissed, were mild when compared to Helfenstein's criticism of Mercersburg's sympathy with Rome. It was the high-church character of Mercersburg as it was perceived as Roman in flavor, more than its philosophic or sacramental position, which infuriated Helfenstein.[710]

Helfenstein was also given the opportunity to express his views in the Messenger. In an article dated 1846, he directed his attack at Mercersburg's sacramental theology and its alleged misrepresentation of Ursinus and the Heidelberg Catechism, (referring to Nevin's articles). Naturally Helfenstein mentions Mercersburg's violation of Scripture at virtually all levels. Yet the book he singles out as most representing the nearly unintelligible theology of Mercersburg is Schaff's Principle of Protestantism.[711]

Helfenstein's article objected most strongly to Mercersburg's conclusion that union with Christ is an issue directly related to the question of the Supper. He denied that sacramental union is with anything other than the Holy Spirit and that on earth there can be no communion with Christ's "human nature." But what remains critically central to Helfenstein's complaint is the repeated and ever prevalent indictment that indirectly through Mercersburg the GRC was being seduced by Rome.

[710] Samuel Helfenstein, "The Rule of Faith," Protestant Quarterly Review, 3, No. 2 (1846), pp. 119-131.

[711] Samuel Helfenstein, "The Mercersburg Controversy," Weekly Messenger of the German Reformed Church, 2 (New Series), No. 21 (1846).

Perhaps the most objective and critically best review of the Principle of Protestantism was Taylor Lewis' "The Church Question." Lewis entertained Mercersburg's conviction that the question of the nature of the Church in the Protestant faith was of central concern to Christianity itself. Although Lewis was not willing to accord this question the same degree of concern given it by Mercersburg, he was convinced that the question revolved around the issue of sacramental union with Christ. He also shared Mercersburg's recognition that in this they held to a minority position and that most Protestants would stand against them in any campaign to raise this position to the forefront of Protestant reflection. On the other hand, Lewis recognized that Mercersburg's position was not that of Pusey or Oxford, and surely not that of Rome.[712]

The key to their distinction, says Lewis, is that they avoid the "dogma of a mediating priesthood" which is narrowly defined. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that Mercersburg remains a vocal critic of American Protestantism. And Lewis summarizes this criticism from the Principle of Protestantism as a rejection of the "ultra tendencies" of Protestant alarmists who have pushed Protestantism to the extreme in the pressure and conflict of this "restless age."[713]

But to say that Mercersburg has abandoned the Reformation is simply false. Lewis finds the clear articulation of the doctrine of justification by faith in the Principle of Protestantism. And yet the historical development of that principle as presented there, as well as the

[712] Taylor Lewis, "The Church Question," rev. of The Principle of Protestantism by Philip Schaff, Biblical Repository, 2 (Third Series), No. 4 (1846), pp. 79-80.

[713] Lewis, "The Church," p. 81.

character of Protestantism in general, as understood by German historical and philosophical science, is unconvincing to Lewis, or at least erroneous in part. But his criticism, as with the criticism of other American theologians, suffers from the confusion encountered in the complexity of Schaff's historical and philosophical system. And so Lewis merely suspects that the historical account is weak, yet does not say where or how.[714]

Rather, Lewis believed that Mercersburg may have overstated the importance of the Church question. And yet he applauds their recognition that Christianity must be a way of life and not simply a doctrine of life. Says Lewis, Christianity's "supernatural" quality must be realized in "an outward society" which stands in "visible contrast to the world." At this point Lewis' own Protestant values lead him to caution that that outward society must not be confused with the "Italian hierarchy."

Testing Schaff's historical ideas about the Church's development, Lewis maintains that the papal line could in no way contain "the true vitality of Christ's mystical body . . . ." Says Lewis, while this "semi-Pagan, semi-atheistic monstrosity" was somehow in the Church, it was never the Church.[715]

Lewis concludes that Rome's corruptions made the Reformation necessary. And today the churches of the Reformation continue to represent the legitimate reaction to ongoing Roman errors. Still, without the doctrines which constitute the history of the Church - there could be no Church. He writes:

[714] Lewis, "The Church," pp. 81-82.

[715] Lewis, "The Church," pp. 82-85.

> . . . we hold it as a self-evident truth, that in determining what Christianity is, we cannot separate it from those doctrines that have ever had their seat in the consciousness of the Church, and formed the manifestation of its continuous life.[716]

Where Lewis is in complete agreement with Mercersburg is in their mutual criticism of American Protestantism's sectarian behavior. However, Lewis does not seem to identify sectarianism as a latent characteristic of the very principles from which Protestantism developed. And he never responds to Mercersburg's identification of the course of sectarianism's organic development. Yet his reaction to the sectarian spirit shares Mercersburg's appeal for "Catholic Unity" and a "church feeling."[717]

This feeling brought a conversion of sorts to Lewis who had more than just an acquaintance with the belief that the true Protestant church survived through the Waldenses. Lewis felt he must accept with Nevin that "there was something more than this in the full idea of the Catholic Church." The Principle of Protestantism (along with Nevin's sermon) convinced him that the "true life" of the Church had not flowed down through a narrow corridor of history but through the "broad stream" of the whole medieval church.[718]

Where Lewis takes his most firm stand against Mercersburg is in his conclusion that Schaff and Nevin have not recognized that a "real Church feeling" still exists among the Protestant denominations. Yet he allows that recently the "crisis" of "criminal sectarianism" has eclipsed that feeling. And while the cure may be found in restoring to Protestantism the

[716] Lewis, "The Church," p. 90. Lewis has clearly accepted Schaff's application of Schleiermacher.

[717] Lewis, "The Church," p. 92.

[718] Lewis, "The Church," pp. 104-105.

idea of "real union to Christ's humanity," he would be more inclined to attempt to persuade Protestants that the unity offered in the Eucharist is with Christ's "human soul."[719]

BERG'S REACTION

Reaction to Schaff's Principle of Protestantism set off a storm in the denomination which would continue even into the liturgical struggles late in the movement's history. The revivalistic faction clearly believed Mercersburg was their enemy. And the greatest source of their animosity was the conviction that Mercersburg was romanistic. Theologically the revivalists were far less sophisticated, but this is not to say they had no distinctive position of their own. They were basically Finneyites theologically, tempered with enough traditional Calvinism (i.e., respect for the confessions) to remain palatable to GRC members primarily concerned with preserving a familiar and comfortable style of religious practice.

The eldest member of the anti-Mercersburg quartet from the Philadelphia area was Samuel Helfenstein. Joining him were his sons, Jacob and Samuel Jr. along with Joseph Berg. Jacob produced a tract which directly accused Mercersburg of "Romanizing." His theological position emerges from his alarming accusations of papal idolatry. His technique is clearly that of the New School Presbyterians. He cites particular passages of Scripture to denounce what he believes is Mercersburg's position. He appeals to what he thinks every good Protestant has always known. And he includes a strong appeal to the obvious, or common sense

[719] Lewis, "The Church," pp. 108-137.

approach to a truly biblical faith.[720]

His father had produced a volume which was used as a theological text in the education of candidates for the ministry. It was a simplified and shortened presentation of the type of "metaphysical Calvinism" which Nevin believed was most fully developed in the larger work by John Dick. While it claimed to base itself on the Heidelberg Catechism, its interpretation of the Catechism demonstrated the Westminster influence along with the characteristic wooden presentation of doctrine as revealed truth.[721]

Four years later, in 1846, Samuel Jr. produced three revivalistic responses to the Mercersburg Theology, two for the Messenger and one for the Protestant Quarterly. The latter accused Mercersburg of siding with tradition over Scripture. Yet a most interesting aspect of this argument is that Helfenstein holds Mercersburg to be Fichtean in its transcendentalism, which he considers successfully repudiated by the philosopher of common sense, Dugald Stewart.[722]

Berg shared the younger Helfensteins' common sense approach to theology and their appreciation for Finney's New Measures. For them Scripture testified to itself as a revealed faith of obvious truth, merit and practical application which is to be believed with the help of the Holy Spirit. Yet above all it was their hatred of Rome that unified them against Mercersburg. Berg considered Roman Catholicism to be the symbolic "Man of

[720] Jacob Helfenstein, "A Perverted Gospel; Or the Romanizing Tendency of the Mercersburg Theology," in Addresses and Essays of Schaff, Nevin and etc. (Mercersburg, Nov. 1853). Schaff's personal edition, Princeton Theological Seminary Library, n.p., n.d.

[721] Samuel Helfenstein, The Doctrines of Divine Revelation (Philadelphia: James Kay, Jun. & Brother, 1842).

[722] Helfenstein, "The Rule," p. 121.

Sin" and "the Great Apostasy." In 1840 Berg debated the issue of Roman Catholicism, and his lectures were favorably received by the GRC Synod. But Nevin personally offended Berg by reviewing the lectures negatively, commenting that Berg merely rode a popular tide. Said Nevin, Berg's lectures do expose the vices of popery, but the threat to the GRC is not from Rome, but from within the denomination itself.[723]

For Berg this was not only a personal insult, it was treason in behalf of a foreign and demonic power. Berg had taken it upon himself to wage war on Roman Catholicism. He became editor of three explicitly anti-Roman periodicals, the Protestant Quarterly Review, the Protestant Banner, and the Evangelical Quarterly. In his position as pastor of the Race Street Church, Berg led an unsuccessful campaign to convert Roman Catholics in Philadelphia. And although Berg appealed for an end to violence during the riots between Protestants and Roman Catholics in Philadelphia, he was clear to point out that while violence is not the answer, Roman Catholics must be brought under Protestant control.[724]

Hostility between Berg and Nevin intensified over Nevin's position on revivals. In 1843 Berg published in the Messenger an angry response to Nevin's position on New Measures.[725] Three years later Berg produced an article in which he openly accused Nevin of holding to a doctrine of "concorporation" (a term certainly borrowed from Hodge). And he defended as truly Reformed his own position of memorialism as not only consistent with ancient Reformed faith, but as the common belief current among American

[723] Harpster, "Controversy," pp. 96-98.

[724] Harpster, "Controversy," pp. 102-106.

[725] Joseph F. Berg, Letter, Weekly Messenger of the German Reformed Church, 9 (New Series), No. 9 (1843), p. 1703.

Reformed people. As proof of this he cited Robert Lyford's work, "Plain Man's Common Sense."[726]

Weeks later Berg made a guarded apology for his repeated attacks on Nevin's personal character, but maintained that he would not retract his criticism of Nevin's theology, nor would he forgive the deceitful character and work of Nevin's "followers."

Beginning in 1848 Berg published six letters in the Messenger accusing Nevin of error in his theological position.[727] As the GRC leadership rallied to the Mercersburg position, Berg began to recognize that the movement represented a direct threat to his own Finneyite position on New Measures theology and the revivalistic direction he would have the denomination go. With this Berg saw the drift away from the New School influence in Protestant orthodoxy.

Berg's own New School theology blended an emphasis on conversion with a millennial and apocalyptic eschatology. His message was one of the nearness of judgment and of the crisis of the times. The enemy, which was growing stronger every day and which sought to rob as many of the faithful as possible from Christ before the deluge, was Roman Catholicism.[728]

Berg's understanding of Reformation history was based on spurious theories which circulated among American Protestant evangelicals. Berg believed that Protestant Christianity descended through a refugee migration

[726] Joseph Berg, "The Mystical Union," Protestant Quarterly Review, 3, No. 2 (1846), p. 141. Berg is speaking of William Lyford's, The Plain Mans Senses Exercised To Discern both Good and Evill (London: Printed for Richard Royston at the Angel in Ivie-lane, 1657).

[727] Joseph Berg, "Letters", Weekly Messenger of the German Reformed Church, March 15, 1848 - June 7, 1848, pp. 2601-2650.

[728] Joseph F. Berg, Prophecy and the Times (Philadelphia: Niggins & Perkinpine, 1856).

during the twelfth century under the leadership of Peter Waldo. Thompson wrote that the theory was used by Berg "to support the idea of a perfect and changeless orthodoxy, which, being entirely untainted by Romanism, traces back through the Waldensians to apostolic times."[729]

In his co-edited work on Mercersburg, Thompson adds that the GRC had been introduced to "Berg's" neo-Waldensian theory at the Synod in Allentown, Pa., in 1844. However two years before, the Messenger had published an article by "W" which argued that Polycarp and a band of refugees had fled persecution in 177 AD and settled in the Alps. "W" maintained that Protestantism had descended directly from this group.[730]

However, Berg himself was bothered by the problem of a thirteen hundred year historical gap. He would only go so far as to identify the refugees with the medieval Waldensians and then, in turn, the sixteenth-century Reformers. Thompson concludes:

> Underlying all these variations of the new 'history' was the idea of a static orthodoxy, brought down unchanged from apostolic times, completely uncontaminated by the Roman antichrist.[731]

Nevin charged that this theory was completely false and undoubtedly Puritan in inspiration. He wrote that only stubborn blindness would prevent one from recognizing that even Scripture is opposed to a concept of unchanging, unevolving orthodoxy and with the ideas of a rapidly apostolizing church followed by a "totally failing church." He concluded that while Puritan lips mouthed their love for the Church which for them

[729] Thompson, "Catechism," pp. 58-59.

[730] Bard Thompson and George H. Bricker, preface, The Mystical Presence, and Other Writings on the Eucharist, by John W. Nevin (Philadelphia: United Church Press, 1966), p. 13.

[731] Thompson and Bricker, preface, p. 13.

existed invisibly among the apostate church of Rome, a church which "was in the wilderness for a thousand years before the Reformation, among the Waldenses, Albigenses, Henricians, Paulicians, and such like . . . ", the truth is they have no love at all for the Church, nor for anything resembling the true historical science which would describe that Church.[732] In Nevin's view, the Puritans contend that the apostolic Church suddenly ceased to exist, except in the named movements, and the popish monster took over, without a hint of historical evidence to attest to the collapse.[733]

The strategy adopted by Nevin to refute Berg and what he believed was a Puritan hypothesis is clearly Hegelian in character (as employed by the Mediating school). Nevin identifies the Puritan prejudice directly in the historical conditions and environment which gave rise to this completely defensive theory. Says Nevin, as was the case with the methods of Tübingen (no doubt thinking of D.F. Strauss and of the school of "higher criticism"), the Puritan theory detaches a piece of history from the Church's development. Tübingen disregards anything before the second century, just as Puritans disregard anything after the first century. Second, says Nevin, both are ultimately nationalistic in their demythologizing the supernatural for their own sake, without regard for the continuity of the Church's historical development.[734]

The cure for both, concludes Nevin, is the article in the Apostles' Creed, "I believe in the holy Catholic Church." By "believing" in the one

[732] John W. Nevin, "Early Christianity; Second Article," Mercersburg Review, 3 (1851), pp. 521-524.

[733] Nevin, "Early Christianity; Second," p. 524.

[734] Nevin, "Early Christianity; Second," pp. 533-534.

Church, faith becomes the primary source of understanding, rather than the search for reasonable claims in servitude to logic.[735]

Eventually Berg left the GRC. But not before pronouncing his disgruntled "Last Words." In response Nevin criticised Berg's farewell address, identifying him as a Puritan with a strong anti-Catholic bias.[736]

Berg had accused Mercersburg of rejecting the Bible as the first principle of Protestantism. To this Nevin responds that the issue had never been the supremacy of Scripture, that remains unquestioned. But it had been an issue of Scriptural interpretation. Secondly, Berg believed that Mercersburg denied the principle of justification by faith by not applying Christ's work of atonement directly to the individual's salvation. To this Nevin responds that Christ's atoning act imputes Christ's righteousness to the individual; it puts him in direct relation to the power of Christ's life as that life is a new and higher order of existence as distinct from nature and "wrought out in the bosom of humanity by Christ as the second Adam." Third, Berg had accused Mercersburg of the Eutychian heresy of overemphasizing Christ's humanity. Nevin counters by calling Berg a Nestorian who will not accept a theanthropic unity in Christ's person. Fourth, Berg accused Mercersburg of substituting the sacraments for the source behind the sacraments. Said Berg, only God is the source of power in the natural world, not the phenomena of the sacraments. Nevin replies that while what Berg said is essentually true, the sacraments are themselves a mystery whose power comes from God. And finally, Berg accused Mercersburg

[735] John W. Nevin, "Dr. Berg's Last Words," Mercersburg Review, 4 (1852), p. 283.

[736] Nevin, "Early Christianity; Second," p. 534.

of not denouncing the Roman Catholic Church. Says Nevin, this is Berg's real problem with Mercersburg. In response Nevin argues that a host of German Reformed authors, including the beloved Hengstenberg, have repeatedly affirmed the continuity of Protestants with the whole Church. Nevin challenges Berg to prove that his views are in violation of the GRC tradition or that he is denominationally bound to hate Rome.[737]

Nevin concludes by detailing how Berg once again, at the May 1852 Synod, had failed even to bring his accusations before the body. He charges him with trying to stir the Synod emotionally, hoping to cause a row. Finally, unable to win his cause, Berg had quit the denomination. Eventually Berg would join Proudfit and Janeway at the Dutch seminary in New Brunswick where they would continue their war against Roman Catholicism.[738]

Schaff was equally appalled by Berg's pseudo-historical theory. He addressed this and other matters relating to what he believed were erroneous Puritan historical ideas, in his article "German Theology and the Church Question" (1853). Here Schaff gave full approval to Nevin's previously published articles on Cyprian (1852) saying, were the saints to return today they would certainly worship with Rome rather than with "Puritan New England." Schaff developed the historical lines which he believed demonstrated that the earliest fathers' conception of the Church had held the view that the unity of the Church is essentially in its

[737] Joseph F. Berg, "Farewell Words to the First German Reformed Church, Race Street, Philadelphia," 1852, in Addresses and Essays of Schaff, Nevin and etc., (Mercersburg, Nov. 1853). Schaff's personal edition, Princeton Theological Seminary Library, n.p., n.d. John W. Nevin, "Dr. Berg's Last Words," Mercersburg Review, 4 (1852), pp. 286-297.

[738] Nevin, "Last Words," pp. 301-303.

"catholicity." This unbroken line survived even in the clear and uncontestable corruptions of the medieval Roman church.[739]

DUTCH REFORMED CONTROVERSY

While the Philadelphia reaction was not able to unseat the Mercersburg professors from their influential positions as the dominant forces controlling the seminary, it was able to create enough controversy to sour relations between the GRC and the Dutch Reformed Church (RCA). The literary record suggests that two of the leading voices within the RCA against the Mercersburg Movement were Proudfit and the editor of the Christian Intelligencer, R. Porter.

Nevin had participated in early efforts to draw the denominations closer together. His earliest articles on the Heidelberg Catechism were praised in an abstract in the Christian Intelligencer which was printed in the Messenger (1842) and which directed its readers to Nevin's work as "the fullest and best with which we have met . . . . "[740] Two weeks later the Messenger reported that Berg and Heiner had recently attended the RCA Synod and were cordially received. The Dutch Synod resolved to establish closer ties with the German Synod, and Berg gave a speech on the "happy state of peace" existing in both German and Dutch churches.[741]

The following year the Messenger reported the favorable reception by

[739] Schaff, "German Theology," pp. 129-130. It is ironic that when Berg accepted the position of professor of dogmatic theology at the Dutch seminary in New Brunswick, he based his lectures on the work of the German theologian Ebrard and his Christian Dogmatics. In Appel, The Life, p. 404.

[740] Weekly Messenger of the German Reformed Church, "Heidelberg Catechism," 7 (New Series), No. 38 (1842), p. 1389.

[741] Weekly Messenger of the German Reformed Church, "The Dutch Reformed Church," 7 (New Series), No. 40 (1842), p. 1397.

the Intelligencer of Nevin's "The Anxious Bench."[742] Nevin himself reported that his sermon on "Catholic Unity" which opened the Triennial Convention of the Reformed Protestant and German Reformed Churches at Harrisburg, Pa., August 8, 1844, a convention which he vigorously promoted, was graciously received by both denominations through their representatives.

But in 1845 the Principle of Protestantism initiated a controversy which came to the attention of the representatives of the RCA who attended the German Synod of 1845. By 1848 the Intelligencer had branded Schaff an enemy. They had discovered a correspondence from Schaff to a friend in Germany which had been printed in the Palm Blatter (1847). Allegedly, the letter accused the Intelligencer of fueling the hatred of the RCA for German theology as well as suppressing the "liberty" of free minds. The Intelligencer quoted Schaff as writing that in the journal's

> [C]ontinually combatting the theory of Romish tradition, they are themselves slavish traditionalists, only with this difference, that their tradition is younger, by many centuries, than the Catholic.[743]

After the publication of the Principle of Protestantism the Intelligencer began criticising Mercersburg for promoting Roman Catholic practices. The mounting hostilities led in 1852 and 1853 to the direct intervention of the RCA into the affairs of the GRC with the complete severance of all ties with the German denomination. It was also in 1852 that Proudfit criticised Nevin in the Princeton Review for the same reason (among other reasons). Nevin had responded on that occasion by

[742] Weekly Messenger of the German Reformed Church, November 1, 1843.

[743] "Dr. Schaff and the Reformed Dutch Church," Christian Intelligencer, 18, No. 32 (1848), p. 126.

angrily reminding the RCA (as represented by Proudfit) that the GRC's history and polity is distinct from that of the RCA. It was a clear warning to the RCA not to interfere in the GRC's internal affairs.[744]

A year before Nevin's article appeared pressure and criticism of the Mercersburg theology had led professors Nevin and Schaff to submit their resignations to the Synod. But the Synod refused to accept the resignations by an almost unanimous vote, in spite of the alleged romanizing tendencies. In response the Dutch Synod resolved to send only one delegate to the next German Synod. But during the intervening months, during which a lengthy report describing the dangerous tendencies of Mercersburg theology was considered, the Dutch Synod formally entered its protest against the Mercersburg theology and in 1852 suspended all correspondence between the two churches. The following is the final resolution:

> Resolved that this Synod do hereby express in the most decided and unequivocal manner their protest against all these sentiments of a Romanizing character and tendency which are technically know as Mercersburg Theology as being essential departures from the faith, as calculated to lead yet further astray from the old landmarks of truth and to undermine the great principles of Reformation from Popery.[745]

The suspension of correspondence continued from 1853 until 1863.

In 1854, during Nevin's supposed retirement, he fired off an unexpected round which left no doubt that he still considered himself the denomination's theological representative as well as the leader of the Mercersburg Movement. The volley included the stern reprimand of the unjust intervention of the RCA in German Reformed denominational matters. And

[744] Nevin, "Heidelberg."

[745] E.T. Corwin, Digest of Constitutional and Synodical Legislation of the Reformed Church in America (New York, 1906), p. 586.

while his article cultivated no new theological ground, it did reiterate the salient points of the Mercersburg theology.[746]

By the time of the writing of "The Dutch Crusade" peaceful renegotiations had begun between the denominations and some clear signs of contrition on the part of certain RCA leaders was evident. Nevin wrote "The Dutch Crusade" as if it represented the testimony of his vindication and the publication before his detractors of the news that finally the Dutch had been convinced that their "crusade" was "wrong and unwise." Yet here again, Nevin identifies the true motivation behind the crusade as anti-Roman Catholic sentiment and the feeling that Mercersburg was a romanizing movement. Nevin concluded that the censoring of the GRC by the RCA was arbitrary and lacking in diplomatic propriety. It was emotional rather than rational.[747]

THE CHURCH CONTROVERSY

Reaction by the Dutch Reformed and other critics of the Mercersburg theology was primarily to their identification of the Church with an objective spiritual, historical institution. The obvious similarity of this idea with Rome's concept of the Church, along with Mercersburg's sacramental theology and harsh criticism of American Protestantism made predictable the association of Mercersburg with what nineteenth-century observers had already witnessed in England as the defection on the part of many Anglicans to Roman Catholicism. To these critics Mercersburg appeared to be a similar defection.

[746] John W. Nevin, "The Dutch Crusade," Mercersburg Review, 6 (1854), pp. 67-117.

[747] Nevin, "Dutch," pp. 67-71.

However, for Mercersburg it was less a direction they were taking toward Rome and more a direction they hoped would be taken by both Protestants and Roman Catholics toward what they believed was the rational as well as inevitable direction required of the one holy and apostolic church of the future. Nevin suggested as much in his tract on revivalism, "The Anxious Bench." Yet the last section of that tract, in which the importance of a unified churchly Protestantism was introduced, went virtually unnoticed. No doubt the controversial issue of revivals was much more the focus of the attention of both critics and supporters.

In his sermon on "Catholic Unity" Nevin repeated in even more direct terms his churchly position, this time with both Dutch and German Reformed church leaders in attendance. Nevin said that this raising of the banner of a churchly theology represented the second stage of the Mercersburg system. The banner would represent the standard by which Puritanism would be resisted in the GRC and in the Reformed churches in the East.

Yet the group Mercersburg chose to identify as Puritans were certainly not the Puritans of sixteenth-century Congregational New England. And while research and understanding of the historical Puritans simply did not exist in the 1850's, Nevin did recognize that an historical distinction must be made between the Calvinism of New England and the Presbyterian Calvinism which arrived in America in the 1700's. Yet practically speaking, Mercersburg's battle was with an evangelical Protestantism which blended concepts borrowed from the abiding influence and principles of New England Puritanism with the ideas and practices of the Presbyterian Calvinism of Westminster. Nevin believed this form of religious ideology was represented by the majority of Protestant Christians in America. So Nevin's identification of American Puritianism was less an empirical identification

based on careful analysis and research, and more a speculative and experiential identification based on his exposure to the current practices among American evangelicals.

Nevin's identification of the practicing majority of American evangelicals, calling the form "Puritanism," was by modern standards a bold and hazardous summary of American Protestant religious practice, and quite obviously a speculative impression characteristic of the historical Hegelianism of the time.

While it is true that the practicing Puritans of Eastern United States continued to exhibit some of the more ancient New England characteristics such as ecclesiastical independence, a somewhat apocalyptic concept of a church and state theocracy and a comparative indifference to the ancient creeds, these practices were blended with the more recent influence of the Westminster confessional theology along with the more modern New England adaptations of traditional Calvinism which sought to reconcile Old School principles with the new methods and insights of inductive science. In addition increasing numbers of evangelicals were being attracted to New School values which included a growing fundamentalism and an emphasis on the importance of spiritual enthusiasm. Thus the epithet "Puritan" may be more confusing than helpful. Nevertheless the resulting religious expression amounted in Nevin and Schaff's view to what they called Puritan pseudo-Protestantism. But again, the practical limitations of the Mercersburg project had them casting great and divergent sections of the religious population in the mold of "Puritan."

The independence and divergency of the so-called practicing Puritans made them sectarian in Mercersburg's thinking. And the fact of the numerous splits and neglect of the Eucharist even among the Presbyterians who

confessed Westminster led Mercersburg to label them unchurchly. Nevin's articles on the problem appeared in 1845 soon after his own thoughts on the subject had been enlightened by Schaff's Principle of Protestantism.

The series of articles appeared in the Messenger under the title, "Pseudo-protestantism." They were specifically directed at Berg and the Protestant Banner. But Nevin had in mind all those Protestants who practiced what Mercersburg called a Puritan form of Christianity, as indicated by his subsequent article called "Pseudo Lutheranism" (1848).

The Banner had identified the churchly threat of Mercersburg as that of Rome. Nevin countered that a growing reactionary sentiment in the Puritan camp was gaining strength and support by fueling a hatred for Rome and any religious form that hints at mysticism. Nevin wrote:

> This form of Protestantism has come to prevail greatly in our own country, and particularly in our own time. As Romanism appears to be waking to new life among us, the opposition to it is naturally quickened at the same time.[748]

It is this very movement and its "bastard zeal" that Nevin calls "Pseudo-protestantism." Nevin writes that such zeal was evident in the latest move by the O.S. Presbyterian General Assembly which condemned Roman baptism. Certainly the act by Rome of excommunicating all Protestants was the reactionary motive. But it is unthinkable to Nevin that with one stroke the Presbyterian Assembly would remove "two-thirds" of Christendom from the body of Christ. He calls the move preposterous and reminds his readers that the GRC has no part in the reaction which would deny all churchly character to the Roman Catholic communion. Instead he recommends the irenic stance of

[748] John W. Nevin, "Pseudo-protestantism," Weekly Messenger of the German Reformed Church, 10 (New Series), No. 48 (1845); No. 49 (1845); No. 50 (1845); No. 51 (1845); No. 52 (1845).

Hengstenberg who is against such reactionary militancy.[749] Protestants and Roman Catholics together must identify the real presence of Christ in an historically unified Church. It was upon this foundation that Nevin established his theory of the Church based on the "Mystical Presence."[750]

According to Nevin, such a position is consistent with Calvin. And while the concept was recovered by Schleiermacher, Nevin has taken Mercersburg beyond Schleiermacher, embracing both the idea of the mystical presence and the "old truth" which affirms both tradition and Scripture. Such must be the practice of the one Church, as unified in her sacramental practice (a practice which has fallen away in all of the larger American Protestant denominations). The GRC must not be intimidated to give up her forgotten tradition for the unchurchly and disruptive influences of "New England Puritanism" which prevail among the majority of American Protestant denominations.[751]

The response to "Pseudo-protestantism," as well as "Schaff On Protestantism" (1845), "The Mystical Union" (1845) and "Our Union with Christ" (1846), produced a wave of fury and alleged misinterpretation. In order to relieve the anxiety and clarify Mercersburg's position, Nevin published his Mystical Presence. However, instead of easing tensions the work only intensified them.

Nevin's close association of the true Church with the actual, historical and institutional body of believers who share in the spirit and

[749] Nevin, "Pseudo," No. 49.

[750] Nevin, "Pseudo," No. 50.

[751] Nevin, "Pseudo," No. 51 & 52.

unity established in the Apostles' Creed received unexpected criticism. While Nevin was sure a negative response to the centrality of the Creed would come from the Baptists and Congregationalists, he never expected criticism from the Dutch Reformed and the members of the GRC.

Nevin responded to the Dutch Reformed attack (written by Proudfit) on his creedal position which accused Nevin of departure from the Bible and an adoption of a philosophical "intuitionism," by specifying how Mercersburg's intuitionism is distinct from that of Schleiermacher. Says Nevin, Mercersburg's only "intuition" is the one shared by the early Church which "intuited" that God's own life was mystically active in the Church through Christ as established in the succession of Apostles. Unlike Schleiermacher, whose intuitionism was highly subjective, Mercersburg regarded Christianity as a "strictly objective supernatural revelation" of mystical character which is apprehended exclusively through faith in Christ.[752]

In response Nevin accuses Proudfit of supporting the anti-Creed heresy which holds the opinion that the Creed is merely a loosely formed commentary on the Scriptures. As such, Proudfit has identified himself with a group of Reformed schoolmen whose "spiritualistic" character opposes any "churchly, priestly, sacramental religion" which identifies the Church in terms of its objective nature.[753]

Nevin also charges them with a rabid hatred of Rome. They, in turn, were aware that Nevin was not merely defending Rome because he found no direct threat there. Word had spread beyond the denomination that Nevin was on the verge of converting to Roman Catholicism. It was not just a rumor.

[752] John W. Nevin, "The Anti-Creed Heresy," Mercersburg Review, 4 (1852), pp. 606-608.

[753] Nevin, "Anti-Creed," pp. 609-615.

Plummer describes a letter written by Nevin to William Heyser in 1852. It indicates that Nevin did seriously consider becoming Roman Catholic and that it was for him a "life and death" situation.[754]

As mentioned earlier, Mercersburg's ecclesiology culminated in Harbaugh's remarkable paper on Church authority (1860). While its steering away from placing authority in a single individual, as well as its avoidance of placing authority in the Church's individual members or congregations, is certainly Reformed, its clear objectifying of all authority in a council as that council is represented by the Synod was an atypical and unrepresentative interpretation of traditional Reformed ecclesiology. Traditionally the Church would not be so closely identified with "the kingdom of God on earth," and thus the objective source of its power would not be so readily identified.[755]

But Mercersburg did not wince at defining the Church in the vitalistic terms which they felt clarified its objective character in modern scientific terms. Understandably, Mercersburg critics, few of whom understood the identity of the subjective and the objective in the vitalism of organic union, simply believed that Mercersburg's objective terminology argued for the existence of the visible Church over that of the invisible Church.

What the anti-Roman critics failed to recognize in Mercersburg was that they never suggested that the Church, which they believed was struggling to develop itself out of the crisis of the nineteenth century, could be identified with any existing denomination. In 1867 Nevin stated

[754] Plummer, "Theology," p. 376.

[755] Harbaugh, "Authority," pp. 127-131.

that no previous answer, neither Rome, England, nor Protestant Europe and America, addresses itself to the real question of the new age. In fact, he said, the older denominations must reconsider their own positions if they are to maintain their status in the modern world.

The surprise in this comment is Nevin's criticism of the Prussian Union Church and with it the advances made by the Mediating school of theology toward solving the "Church Question." In the same year of the address mentioned above, Nevin clarified Mercersburg's churchly debt to the Mediating school in an article published in the Mercersburg Review. Mercersburg's debt exists in the mediator's placing "the actual life of Christ" in "the actual history of the Church." But the German church could not transcend the latitudinarianism which she inherited from rationalism, nor could she free herself from the tyranny imposed by a state religion which could not recognize the separate existence of the Church from that of the state.[756]

During these later years of the Mercersburg Movement a feeling of pessimism became evident in Nevin's writing. Theological misunderstandings, failures in liturgical renewal and continuing criticism isolated Nevin even from Schaff. In spite of these failures Nevin intensified his attack on what he believed were idle attempts at Protestant unity.

In 1868 Nevin ridiculed the November 6, 1867, Presbyterian convention for church reunion held in Philadelphia, Pa. He described it as

> one of the most sorrowful exemplifications of the misery of our prevailing sect system, as well of its helpless, hopeless insufficiency for working out successfully its own cure.[757]

[756] Nevin, "Relations," p. 632.

[757] John W. Nevin, "Presbyterian Union Convention," Mercersburg Review, 15 (1868), p. 95

Nevin continued to reflect in this article that the denominational concept is at heart divisive and sectarian. And while the Presbyterians at the convention all proclaimed their allegiance to Westminster, they could do nothing at all to unite themselves. Said Nevin, the convention did nothing more than pass "the tautological basis of union" in which the convention's work ended with a paltry statement of unity which set "the impotence of such a conclusion in its most glaring light."[758]

The emotion and sentimental display of the chimera of unity was exemplified for Nevin in the impassioned speech given by Dr. Hodge. Nevin accused Hodge of endorsing the convention's empty gestures and pious language. Nevin charged that the convention had no real sense of catholic unity as exemplified in the Apostles' Creed, but only the denominational unity of another sect. Indeed, he insisted, what was really at stake was the consolidation of power by the Presbyterian Council. Were catholic unity at stake, the convention would have embraced the unifying spirit of the Creed and by it be led to seek unity not in a plurality of private interests, but in the historical and sacramental unity of the Church's spiritual life. Yet such an undertaking would require the council's denunciation of self-interest.

Nevin concluded that the convention had "no significance" for the cause of Presbyterianism. Neither would any ecumenical cause be significant unless it plants itself "confessionally, in the original Christian creeds, as all our evangelical Protestantism professed to do in the beginning."[759]

[758] Nevin, "Convention," pp. 95-98.

[759] Nevin, "Convention," pp. 98-106.

Nevin's radical views of the Church led to the most dramatic splits within the Mercersburg party itself. Nevin's own direction toward Rome as a possible alternative to Protestantism was a direction never shared by Schaff. Nevin's personal views of the Church as they informed his liturgical theology, while not antagonizing Schaff, did ultimately distinguish the otherwise unified thinkers. Some of Nevin's students became Roman Catholics. Other members of the party turned against Nevin. One defector, Bomberger, was a member of the liturgical committee. While Bomberger's exact reasons are clouded in a haze of personality disputes, he made it clear that he suspected an undue influence of Rome in Nevin's thinking. Furthermore, it was the issue of the Church that led to the defection of B.S. Schneck, whose book sought to establish that Mercersburg's stress on the objective quality of the Church was not Reformed and led to treating faith as an object, namely the Church.[760]

ROMAN CATHOLIC CONTROVERSY

What unified most critics of Mercersburg was the idea that its doctrine of the Church was Roman Catholic. Indeed Nichols argued:

> The greatest scandal of Mercersburg theology was that it attempted to relate itself to Catholicism, both practically and historically, in a positive way.[761]

Ryan supports this idea, adding that Mercersburg believed that Puritanism might be reconciled to a proper idea of the Church by returning to creedal fidelity.[762]

[760] Schneck, Mercersburg, pp. 53-54.

[761] Nichols, Mercersburg, p. 21.

[762] Ryan, "Nevin," pp. 195-196.

Mercersburg's liberal attitude towards Rome was extremely unpopular among American Protestants in general. Even Old School Presbyterians like Hodge had no use for Rome and considered it the anti-Christ. And among the great social gospel movements after 1825, where the raising of "social conscience" by ecumenical cooperation, anti-slavery organizations, temperance groups, prison reform movements, anti-poverty campaigns, etc., reached a remarkable scale and proportion, there remained among these groups a great hostility towards the Roman Catholic denomination. Harpster writes that while many Protestants participated in social action campaigns there remained an influential group

> who felt that the greatest danger to the United States of America and her political and religious institutions was not to be found in intemperance, the brutal prison conditions, or the institution of slavery, but in the power of the Roman Catholic Church. For these people the war against 'popery' became the crusade to which they gave nearly all their energies.[763]

Often Protestant men and women actively involved in one or more of the humanitarian campaigns shared simultaneously a deep suspicion of Rome. Certainly a factor influencing that suspicion and fear was the tremendous growth of the Roman Catholic population during the eighty years following the Revolutionary War. During that period the Roman population grew from around sixteen thousand to three million. And one of the centers of that growth was the city of Philadelphia, the residence of Joseph Berg.

Like Berg, Nevin was an activist. His early years were spent passionately pursuing social justice and reform. Also with Berg he began as an outspoken critic of Rome. In 1835 he attempted an historical review of "the first English Bible." The article included severe criticism of what

[763] Harpster, "Controversy," p. 90.

Nevin described as the corruptions of Rome.[764]

Nevin remained a mild critic of Rome into the early period of his Mercersburg years. In 1843, prior to the publication of the Principle of Protestantism, he registered alarm at Rome's incursion into the "Republic."[765] In 1844 Nevin was still able to decry the "popish errors" and reject the "Antichrist" of papal leadership in his otherwise irenic and ecumenical article (from his sermon), "Catholic Unity."[766]

Philip Schaff influenced Nevin's reconsideration of Roman Catholicism. Schaff's more liberal attitude was developed in Europe. His earliest Mercersburg articles demonstrate his enlightened attitude in his historical reminder to Protestants that Rome is the true mother of the Reformation. However, he is clear to point out that many of the errors which led to the Reformation remain unchecked by Rome. Together Schaff and Nevin began to encourage members of the GRC to turn their energies away from hating Rome and towards hating the divisive spirit which was preventing the churches of the Reformation from completing their objective of purifying the one Church of Christ.

However, Joseph Berg and his party had invested virtually everything in stopping what they perceived to be a tidal wave of Roman influence covering Philadelphia and Eastern United States. With Helfenstein, Berg tried to convince the German Synod that it is sheer blindness to believe that Mercersburg simply sought to balance the denomination's emphasis of

[764] John W. Nevin, "The English Bible," Presbyterian Preacher, 4, No. 2 (1835), pp. 113-132.

[765] John W. Nevin, "American Protestant Association," Weekly Messenger of the German Reformed Church, 8 (New Series), No. 32 (1843), p. 1851.

[766] Nevin, "Catholic," p. 1861.

Scripture with that of tradition. They argued that Mercersburg would instead supply the imbalance of Roman deviltry.[767]

That year (1847) Nevin responded to Helfenstein's article. It was here that Nevin argued before the denomination that it was Puritanism and not Romanism that threatened orthodox Protestant Christianity. It is not Pusey or Rome's retention of the idea of the Church as a "supernatural life-bearing constitution in the world" that threatens American Christianity, but Puritanism's support of "rampant individualism" that may subvert American religion.[768]

Nevin's identification of an organized effort to promote Puritanism by fueling a native hatred of Rome led him to expose what he believed was "false" Protestantism and to seek a more object and historical understanding of the Roman Catholic Church among Protestants. However, his style was aggressive and controversial. He identified leaders of the anti-Roman movement in the most critical terms and cast them as representatives of "the reigning tone of Protestant thought" in America. He then compared what he called the intolerant and misinformed writings of particular representatives, for example the notorious anti-Roman pamphleteer Kirwan, to the more enlightened approach of a writer usually influenced by German philosophy, for instance the Roman Catholic Möehler.[769]

Mercersburg was convinced that the "reigning tone" of American Protestantism had its most damaging effect in the influence of the radical leaders of the opposition to the reconciliation of the various

[767] Helfenstein, "The Rule," p. 128.

[768] Nevin, "Church," p. 3.

[769] John W. Nevin, "Kirwan's Letters," Mercersburg Review, 1 (1849), pp. 231-237.

denominations in America. On the Protestant side men like Kirwan, Berg and Helfenstein promoted the controversial issue of the Roman church which masked the real issue which continued to divide the Church. Puritans had so denigrated the sacraments and the creeds for Protestantism by identifying them with Rome, that it had become impossible for many Protestants to recall that both Puritanism and sacramentalism derive from the same catholic faith. Mercersburg believed that without knowledge of this fact reconciliation would be impossible, and the recovery of the mystery of the Sacrament of Holy Communion would be perceived by Protestants as a defection to apostate Rome.[770].

On the Roman side men like Orestes A. Brownson contributed to the problem by identifying German Idealism in the same disparaging terms used by Princeton and the anti-Roman faction and thus neutralized what Mercersburg saw as the theological means to church reunification. Brownson charged German Idealism with idolatry, and, while he affirmed the centrality of a supernatural Church existing objectively in the world, he made the ecclesiastical institution of Rome the exclusive source of God's presence in the world. His effect on Protestantism, according to Mercersburg, was to demand their loyalty to the thing they most hated, the papacy.[771]

Nevin challenged Brownson's understanding of German Idealism in the context of Brownson's doctrine of the Church. Nevin believed that in Brownson's converting from Unitarianism to Roman Catholicism he had merely

[770] Nevin, "Sacramental," p. 139.

[771] Orestes A. Brownson, Brownson's Quarterly Review, vol. 1 (1844), pp. 57-84; vol. 2 (1845), pp. 380-397; vol. 1 (New Series, 1847); pp. 100-115; vol. 3 (New Series, 1849), p. 495.

exchanged one form of rationalism for another, its opposite. Having failed to find for himself in Unitarianism a church which made logical sense, Brownson turned to Rome in a desperate attempt to find for himself a church that simply established that sense in outward authority. In other words, Nevin concluded, the rationale which found no satisfaction in a faith which apprehended the divine, became a rationale which found satisfaction in simply acquiescing to authority's claim of divine status. Both alternatives are ultimately rationalistic. The effect of Brownson's point of view is an unnatural zealotry as narrow as that of anti-Roman Protestants. Each would efface the history and effect of the other. Each would ignore the other's tradition and place.[772]

Brownson replied to Nevin in 1850. He immediately recognized Nevin's scholarly ability which he described as rare among Protestants in general. But as a Protestant Nevin was, by definition, against the Church. Brownson contended that if he is able to show Nevin's system to be faulty, then it must be that he was right to flee to Rome, for Nevin has come as close as a Protestant can to the true idea of the Church.[773]

Brownson argued that Nevin had failed at the point of his concise doctrine of the Church which foundered in its dependence on German Idealism. Brownson claims that Nevin ultimately remains idealistic and subjective on the issue of the Church. He does not show how the Church, as a supernatural agent, becomes objective in history, and thus theologically the divine never becomes objective in the world itself.[774]

[772] Nevin, "Brownson," pp. 33-45.

[773] Orestes Brownson, "Reply to the Mercersburg Review," Brownson's Quarterly Review, 4 (New Series, 1850), pp. 191-194.

[774] Brownson, "Reply," pp. 195-201.

The controversy heated up when Nevin directly challenged Brownson's knowledge of German idealistic philosophy. Again, ironically, Brownson shared the view of Princeton and the "Puritan" opponents of Mercersburg that German idealism is essentially pantheistic. Therefore, Nevin's objective was to specify clearly how idealism identifies the absolute or divine in the finite or corporeal. Mercersburg, with the Mediating school in Germany, believed they had found the relation between the natural and the supernatural in "an organic or inwardly living correspondence" between the two spheres of existence. Brownson, like the so-called Puritans, treated God as completely separate and entirely removed from the world. Thus, claimed Nevin, it is Brownson and not he that has failed to establish the means by which the divine exists in the world. Simply to insist that the divine exists in the world in the Roman episcopate is essentially the same as the spiritist claim that the divine exists in the individual heart by faith.[775]

In 1854 and 1858 Brownson reviewed the Mercersburg "hypothesis" which he believed had not finally proved the case of historical development. Brownson argued that the concept of organic development depended on Hegelian historical philosophy and was thus pantheistic and heretical. Throughout the controversy Brownson argued in virtually the same terms and with the same "common sense" approach as employed by Princeton. Yet his outcome was the opposite of Puritanism. For example, Hodge and Berg remained committed to an inward understanding of Christianity in which individual faith remained central. Brownson remained committed to an outward understanding of Christianity in which obedience to the Roman

[775] Nevin, "Brownson Again," p. 308.

Catholic Church remained central. Yet both criticised Mercersburg in terms which shared what Mercersburg believed was a mechanical and rationalistic starting point. Neither sought to reconcile the real differences which resulted from their distinctive positions. Mercersburg concluded that Brownson had merely abandoned one entrenched position for another.[776]

Brownson's imbalance on the side of the "objective" was the mirror opposite of the Unitarian emphasis on the "subjective." Traditional Protestant emphasis on personal faith over church authority was balanced in evangelical Protestantism by the equally traditional emphasis on the importance of Scripture. The reigning dogmatic system at Princeton, that of John Dick, argued against tradition and the standards by not merely placing Scripture above them, but by making Scripture the only standard. Dick wrote, "Protestants acknowledge the Scriptures alone as the standard of truth."[777] In contrast Nevin deviates from Dick in his lecture and establishes the mediating position:

> The symbolical books or standards must not govern us absolutely in the interpretation of Scripture, nor must we interpret ad libitum without them.[778]

Mercersburg's cause again is to seek a third alternative to the two warring and exclusive positions of outward authority and inward faith. Yet Protestant hatred of the Roman Catholic religion made it difficult to refocus Protestant attention away from Rome's weaknesses and toward a new

[776] Orestes Brownson, "The Mercersburg Hypothesis," Brownson's Quarterly Review, 2 (Third Series, 1854), pp. 253-257 and "The Church As Organism," Brownson's Quarterly Review, 3 (New York Series, 1858), pp. 112-113.

[777] Dick, Lectures, p. 134.

[778] Erb, "Nevin's Classroom Lectures," p. 53.

unified catholic future. Throughout Dick's lectures unpopular Roman ideas, such as the doctrine of purgatory, are described in damning terms and equated with the 'lies of the anti-Christ.'[779] It is remarkable, therefore, that given this climate, Nevin would attempt to promote the early saints of the ancient church. Instead of moving cautiously to mediate the Roman point of view for an hostile Protestant audience, in 1851 Nevin began a series of articles on early Christianity and on St. Cyprian which emphasized the need of Protestants to recover their catholic past and no longer delude themselves that the ancient church resembled the churches of their current involvement. The storm of controversy which followed serves to indicate the size and passion of Protestant anti-Roman sentiment even at the highest intellectual levels. Yet in spite of that, Nevin was bold to state that St. Cyprian's "doctrine of the Church" re-shaped his entire theological system.[780]

With a clear eye to the Roman abuses which eventually divided the Church, in these articles Nevin sets out to recover for Protestantism the spirit of Nicaea which, in the anti-Roman camp's acceptance of nothing after the Apostles, contemporary Protestant thinking had all but expunged from memory. It is the question of the Church that Nevin pursues, in the Church's development at the close of the Apostolic age until the Nicene Council. Nevin was convinced that by this time the central "idea" of the faith was fairly homogenous and that St. Cyprian was a clear representative of and spokesman for that idea. Nevin does not imply that there was not disagreement about a wide range of issues, including the Sacraments, Church order, and the authority of Scripture. But he argued that the fundamental

[779] Dick, Lectures, p. 311.

[780] Nevin, "Cyprian: Second," p. 346.

principles of the faith were intact, and that these principles were organized under the universal principle which held that the Holy Catholic Church had entered the world as a unique and divine institution constituting itself under the articles (or basic outline) of the Apostles' Creed.[781] Given these facts it must be readily seen today that it is absolute folly, in terms of the barest of historical evidence, for the Puritan churches, the Congregational churches, the Baptists, as well as the Episcopal Church, to argue that their current constitution is in direct historical line with the primitive form, especially as the Puritan church openly rejects the Apostles' Creed.[782]

Nevin's strategy in "Cyprian" is first to present Cyprian's system. Secondly, he argues that it was the system generally held by the whole primitive church. Thirdly, he describes its wide difference from the Baptist, Puritan, and Anglican systems which had been represented in various articles as the "true" continuation of the early apostolic church. Finally, he asks a question which he never answers. It represents his challenge to the reader. Nevin asks, was the Cyprianic system - which believed the Church to be a divine institution of inward spiritual thrust and which took upon itself an objective structure in the offices of priest, sacrament, etc. - was that system true or false, right or wrong?[783]

Nevin's rhetoric was primarily meant to flush out the Protestant "sectarians" who peddled the myth that they were the "true" Church, a claim

[781] Nevin, "Cyprian: Third," p. 451.

[782] Nevin, "Cyprian: Third," p. 451.

[783] Nevin, "Cyprian: Fourth," pp. 544-555.

which appeared time and again in religious periodicals, whether from the headquarters of the Puritans or the Episcopalians. In addition Nevin wanted to clearly identify those who would side with the idea of the divine Church over against those who would not.

But rather than allow the issue to be one of the existence or lack of existence of an historical and divine system operating in the world, Mercersburg's critics wanted to argue the issues of Roman influence and pantheistic philosophy. Try as they would, Mercersburg could not focus the issue away from Protestantism's possible ruin at the hands of Rome. In Berg's farewell address, preached the year Nevin's articles on early Christianity began to appear, he called Nevin the "Romish controversialist," and described the movement as a capitulation to the "whore."[784] The same year in another article he described Mercersburg Seminary as a Romish sect.[785] Janeway added of Schaff that his historical work painted a false picture of the Middle Ages. He said that Schaff's romantic view of the Roman church minimized the "heathenish idolatry" which prevailed there. Mercersburg had effectively given itself over to the "popery" of "Babylon." Proudfit identified Nevin's defense of the Roman Mass as a ploy in "Rome's deception."[786] And Helfenstein concluded that Mercersburg's theology was "decidedly Romanistic."[787]

However, within the Mercersburg school Nevin's articles on early Christianity were hailed as a triumph over the forces of sectarianism.

[784] Berg, "Farewell," p. 9 and p. 23.

[785] Joseph Berg, "The New Theology," Protestant Quarterly Review, 9 (1852), pp. 97-103.

[786] Proudfit, "Heidelberg," p. 117.

[787] Helfenstein, "Perverted Gospel," p. 3.

Schaff applauded Nevin's work and wrote that he concluded with Nevin that the early fathers had a decidedly "catholic" idea of the Church and that it was sheer madness for the modern Protestant sects to believe that they represent the early church.[788]

Yet Mercersburg remained an island of new Protestant thinking in America. The enormous popular support of the Protestant anti-Roman movement insured the lasting stigma of popish influence on Mercersburg. Even outside the denomination the stigma continued to plague Mercersburg. From New York, David Lord wrote in 1853 and 1854 accusing Nevin of romanism and of pantheism.[789] And as late as 1868 the same accusation was leveled by A.S. Vaugh who labeled Mercersburg "semi-Romanism."[790]

THE MYSTICAL PRESENCE CONTROVERSY

Nevin's Mystical Presence confirmed what the forces of anti-Romanism had begun to suspect just before 1846, that Nevin and Schaff were united in establishing evangelical catholicism in the GRC through their influence as professors at the Mercersburg Seminary. Before its publication the "Puritan" leaders of the denomination concentrated on Schaff as the foreign agent of romish views. Enormous pressure had been exerted on Schaff in an effort to discredit him and his developmental theory of the Church. Their shock came when articles began to appear from the pen of Nevin which seemed to lend support to the ideas of Schaff (for example, Pseudo-

[788] Schaff, "German Theology," p. 130 and p. 140.

[789] David N. Lord, "The Doctrines of Dr. Nevin and His Party," Theological and Literary Journal, 5 (1853), pp. 636-688, and "Dr. Nevin's Pantheistic and Development Theories, Theological and Literary Journal, 6 (1854), pp. 146-166.

[790] A.S. Vaughan, The New Altar: And Earnest and Practical Examination of Ritualism (York: Oliver Stuck, 1868), p. 3.

protestantism," 1845). The confusion over these articles led to the publication of the Mystical Presence. Nevin later called this the fourth stage of the Mercersburg system.

The fourth stage began where the German Mediating school had brought theology so far. It was therefore appropriate that the book be prefaced by the influential mediator Carl Ullmann's, "The Distinctive Character of Christianity," 1845. Ullmann established the christological starting point which led to the conclusion that organic mystical union with Christ is the only source of salvation. It was then left to Nevin's Mystical Presence to consider that union through the sacramental means and with respect to the sacramental practice of the American Protestant churches. Said Nevin:

> The work was a vindication at large of the old Calvinistic Doctrine of the Lord's Supper, conveying against the general Protestantism of the present time a charge of wholesale defection from the Protestant sacramental faith of the sixteenth-century.[791]

As such, Nevin's book introduced to his American readers a completely new argument, as well as a new way of arguing. Its novelty consisted in what Nichols described as a discourse based on an historical argument. It included research into Calvin and the confessions of the Swiss, French, Dutch, German, Scots and English churches. It contrasted these with the discourse of "American Reformed theology," which Nevin concluded was mainly influenced by New England Congregationalism and the thought of Jonathan Edwards, Samuel Hopkins, Joseph Bellamy, Yale's President Dwight, Ashbel Green (Old School) and Albert Barnes (New School) among others.[792]

Hostile reaction to the Mystical Presence erupted over Nevin's claim

[791] Nevin, "Letter," p. 1.

[792] Nichols, Mercersburg, p. 199.

that the Reformed churches had abandoned the traditional doctrine of the Lord's Supper which maintained the "real" presence of Christ in the Eucharist. Nevin identified the question of the Eucharist as "central to the whole Christian system." Because of its centrality and Protestantism's unwillingness to recognize it as such, the degree of Protestantism's departure from the track of the Reformation could be traced to its departure from the Eucharistic question.[793]

Nevin's objective is to return Protestantism to the Reformation track by bringing "into view the theory of the Lord's Supper, as it stood in the general creed of this section of the Church in the sixteenth century."[794]

The doctrine he presents is mainly that of Calvin. But he believes the Reformed doctrine of the Lord's Supper arose more broadly through the Reformed cultus itself in its reaction to the "Lutheran dogma" and in reaction to the Socinian tendencies among Reformed leaders.[795]

The fundamental question behind the controversy, both at the time of the Reformation and for the Reformed of Nevin's period, was the question of the nature of the celebrating believer's union with Christ. Nevin argues that the answer given by the Reformed churches is effectively the same as the answer being suggested by Mercersburg. Union with Christ at Eucharist exists in the impartation of Christ of an inward, living union with the believer. In this the believer is engrafted into Christ's own life. And while this life is mediated by the Holy Spirit, it is nevertheless Christ

[793] Nevin, Mystical, p. 52.

[794] Nevin, Mystical, p. 53.

[795] Nevin, Mystical, p. 54.

himself who fellowships with the believer. Furthermore, this union involves the "whole living person" of Christ and not just Christ as "the Son of God." The believer's union is with Christ's flesh and blood.[796]

Nevin would stress two controversial points. First, that the Reformed position maintained the "objective force" of the the sacred meal. And second, that the grace of the sacrament which is itself invisible, is nonetheless the impartation of Christ to the believer "particularly in his human nature." Yet Nevin concludes that he sees certain problems with the old Reformed doctrine.[797]

Nevin's concern was that the Reformers suffered from an inadequate understanding of the idea of personality. Mercersburg dealt with that problem in their psychology which understood personality according to organic unity. But this was a major concern of Mercersburg's critics. Berg, for example, bowed to Nevin's historical expertise and allowed that the American branch of the German Reformed churches had modified the old European doctrine of the Supper. But he would not accept Nevin's revision of Calvin. Said Berg, Calvin and the American churches teach that it was the Holy Spirit who imparts Christ to the believer, and that the believer partakes of him spiritually, not taking in his humanity.[798]

Nevin's most powerful critic was less willing to bow to what Berg considered Nevin's superior knowledge of the sources. Charles Hodge waited until 1848 to critically review Nevin's book which he characterized as a tirade against the alleged "apostasy of the Reformed church." He criticised

[796] Nevin, Mystical, pp. 57-58.

[797] Nevin, Mystical, pp. 61-62.

[798] Berg, "German Controversy," p. 304.

its style of argument and locution, and concluded that he found it wrong both in its argument and its historical evidence.[799]

The historical failure was Nevin's alleged misrepresentation of the ancient Reformed doctrine of the Lord's Supper. According to Hodge, that doctrine was and is the one articulated by John Calvin and none other. Calvin's doctrine concerning the question of union is that while Christ is truly present, he is present only in spirit. He is received as such, invisibly, by faith. The union which is established is purely mystical and spiritual.[800]

As for Nevin's present views, Hodge has only scorn for Mercersburg's modern revision of Calvin. It depends on Nevin's peculiar understanding of psychology. Nevin's psychological theories are "of 'organic law,' personality and generic and individual life." Here Hodge proceeds to give a summary of the philosophic basis of the Mystical Presence. From this summary it becomes evident that not only did Hodge reject German Idealism, but that he was at this point unwilling or unable to understand it. His conclusion is that Nevin has borrowed Schleiermacher's "theory." And rather than argue against the latter's view, Hodge merely asserts that Schleiermacher's position is not that of the Reformed churches but much more like the theories of Roman Catholicism.[801]

First, Hodge continues, it is Eutychian. (This seems most implausible given Mercersburg's strong affirmation of Nicene orthodoxy and Hodge's earlier remark that Nevin has simply borrowed from Schleiermacher, a theologian sometimes labeled a Nestorian.) As such, it is not only un-

[799] Hodge, "Doctrine," p. 227.

[800] Hodge, "Doctrine," pp. 230-258.

[801] Hodge, "Doctrine," pp. 260-264

Calvinistic, but as Calvin is orthodox, Nevin's position is completely outside of the "whole church." Finally, he concludes that Nevin has departed from the orthodox doctrine of Christ's dual nature.

Second, Nevin is wrong to say that the believer's union with Christ is established in any way other than by the power of the Holy Spirit. Here, again, Nevin follows Schleiermacher. And Ullmann's essay proves this. By following Schleiermacher, Nevin has departed from Calvin. And by making the believer's union with Christ a union with Christ's actual life, Nevin repudiates Calvin, making Christ's dispensation completely unique, thereby creating a false antinomy between the old and new covenants.[802]

For Berg and his party Hodge's review represented definitive and expert proof that the Mercersburg theology was heretical and Romanistic. Berg went so far as to reproduce the review in the Protestant Quarterly Banner. And he adopted many of Hodge's arguments in his ongoing criticism of Nevin and the Mercersburg theology.[803]

Nevin did not hesitate to respond to Hodge. It was the beginning of a public and private debate between the two that went beyond the issues found in the Mystical Presence. Here we report only on the first three of Nevin's stinging replies as the essence of his initial reaction. We shall cover the controversy itself in the following section.

Nevin begins characteristically by first "revealing" the identity of his opponent, his "real" or governing objectives and principles. Hodge is an Old School Presbyterian. His theology is characterized by the subjective

[802] Hodge, "Doctrine," pp. 264-268.

[803] Charles Hodge, "Doctrine of the Reformed Church, On the Lord's Supper," Protestant Quarterly Banner, 5, No. 3 (1848).

and mechanical devices which operate from commonly established and self-evident "facts." His argument is marked by an unhistorical method which suffers from ignorance of the ancient sources. Nevin responds that it is no longer permissible to rely on Turretin and Dick in interpreting Calvin. And to argue without evidence that Calvin and Bucer "strained" to accommodate the Lutherans, as the reason for the hint of a real presence in Calvin's doctrine of the Lord's Supper, is flagrantly manipulative.[804]

In the second article Nevin presses the embarassing accusation that Hodge was forced to rely on the Mystical Presence as his primary source of the Reformation debate. Nevin reports that the only original source Hodge would offer to dispute him is the Consensus Tigurinus (1549) which Nevin contends "has never been allowed to be at all of any such primary force in the Reformed Church." Nevin continues that this document becomes the "Procrustean bed" in which all Reformed doctrine on the Lord's Supper must now rest. To illustrate Hodge's confusion, Nevin indicates that it is, of all authorities, the zealot Lutheran and anti-Reformed crusader Guerike on whom Hodge depends to criticise Nevin's sacramental argument.[805]

In the third article Nevin concentrates on the issue of Christ's presence. He cannot understand how Hodge could accuse his Mystical Presence of suggesting any "corporeal contact" with Christ. Nor has Nevin ever stated that Calvin believed in physical contact with Christ in the elements. But contact with Christ is the surprise and "embarrasment" of Hodge. Equally surprising to Hodge is the "orthodox" language used by Calvin to describe the actual presence of Christ in the Eucharist. In

[804] Nevin, "Dr. Hodge," No. 37.

[805] Nevin, "Dr. Hodge," No. 38

Nevin's view, Hodge has a natural revulsion to the mystery as it is expressed in the language of the sixteenth century. Nevin believes that Hodge would have preferred it if Calvin represented the salvific union

> as a sort of mysterious influence simply supposed to emanate from Christ's corporeal presence in heaven, like the power that flows from the sun . . . .[806]

THE HODGE CONTROVERSY

In contrast to Princeton, Mercersburg represented the salvific union as a local and real presence in a language strangely foreign to American evangelicals. This helps explain some of the resistance to it. But it does not explain the way this resistance grew into a full scale war between the supporters of Mercersburg and those unwilling to even consider this new theological vocabulary. With the publication of the Mystical Presence the two fronts became clear. But the leader of the opposition did not appear until a year had passed.

In 1848 Charles Hodge launched his furious attack against the Mercersburg Movement. It led to an ongoing debate which produced some of the finest Protestant thinking on the question of the Eucharist in American theology. Indeed, Nichols writes that Nevin's 1850 reply to Hodge was "one of the first significant American contributions to the history of theology." It provided stark contrast between Nevin as "a modern scholar" and the old orthodox scholastic approach of Hodge which had little sense of the "meaning or movement of history." It was a confrontation between a scholar who employed a radically new language of philosophy, psychology and theology and the self-proclaimed traditionalist who read Calvin through the

[806] Nevin, "Dr. Hodge," No. 39.

scholasticism of Turretin and Pictet and who was influenced by the inductive science of Scottish Realism.[807]

Hodge was a Calvinist in the tradition of his famous teacher, Archibald Alexander, who also followed Turretin's textbook in his understanding of Calvin. But in addition the Princeton school had been modified by Edwards' New England theology and Hodge had come to believe that Princeton remained the last defender of this American Calvinist tradition.[808]

Hodge had continued the scholastic tradition in his understanding of the eternal decrees of God, his understanding of the doctrine of predestination (which included a modern softening of the old view) and his seventeenth-century scholastic christology, which became the most prominent peak of his system.[809]

Appel described Hodge as a philosophical Lockean whose thoroughgoing realism "regarded all general terms as abstractions of the mind without reality or entity in the natural order of the world."[810] But recent study indicates that Hodge's Lockean position was informed by the more current ideas of Scottish Realism. Mark Noll has indicated that "Scottish Common Sense Realism" was designed specifically for the task of saving "the benefits of England's 'moderate' Scientific Revolution for good theology, public order, and rational well being." And Hodge was deeply committed to this philosophic language and method, such that Noll considers him as pure

[807] Nichols, Romanticism, pp. 89-90.

[808] K.P. Berg, "Charles A. Hodge, Controversialist," Diss. State University of Iowa 1952.

[809] Nelson, "Rise," p. 353.

[810] Appel, The Life, p. 294.

an example of the Scottish approach as there could be.[811]

Yet there is evidence that Hodge came to be critical of the most recent work in the Scottish school. It appears that around 1839 Hodge was preparing an inauguration in America of his own "realistic dualism" (as he would later come to call it). It would be Princeton's conservative continuation of the tradition of Locke and Edwards in an attempt to recover from what Princeton considered the stagnation of realism in England and Scotland. Undoubtedly Hodge's system would still reflect the influence of Scottish Commmon Sense Realism. Yet his system would seek a more inductive approach in terms of Scripture. That program seems to have been interrupted by what Hodge suspected was the growing influence in England and America of German and French Idealism. Princeton responded with their own critique of idealism. Articles began appearing in the Princeton Review attacking Cousin, Schleiermacher, Hegel and others. One such article set off an angry exchange between Princeton and an English translator of Cousin, Caleb S. Henry. He accused Princeton of obvious ignorance of idealism and the total misuse of the term "pantheism."[812] At about the same time Princeton discovered that German Idealism was being practiced by the GRC under the leadership of Rauch in Mercersburg. In subsequent years Princeton directed its battle against American idealism as Hodge became Mercersburg's great nemesis.

By 1856 Hodge had settled his mind as to his position on idealism both at home and abroad. He published his personal review of Cousin's work. In it he applauds the position of Princeton before 1839 and adds that the

[811] Noll, Princeton, p. 30 and p. 32. See also Bozeman, Protestants.

[812] Alexander and Dodd, "Transcendentalism," pp. 37-38, and Charles Hodge, "Princeton Review and Cousin's Philosophy," Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review, 28 (1856).

charge of "pantheism" was justified. But he remains distracted from his original goal of establishing "dualistic realism" in order to continue his criticism of idealism. Nevertheless the seeds of his philosophy are planted here. Those seeds come to fruition in his "Nature of Man."

In "Nature of Man" Hodge presents the outline of his system of "dualistic realism." First, Hodge reasserts the classical distinction between the real substance of body and soul, involving what he affirms as the "idea" of substance which is a self-evident and universal law of reason. To support this he describes the vain attempt by "Leibnitz" to establish a philosophic "monism."[813] Hodge writes that realistic dualism contends that only real entities constitute species or genus. Furthermore, only a "real substance" gives discrete particulars their identity. "That which constitutes the species or genus is a real objective existence." Yet even in setting out his realistic dualism Hodge is primarily interested in refuting the idealistic system of Mercersburg. Thus realistic dualism is offered as the direct refutation and orthodox substitute for Mercersburg's system of organic development. Hodge wrote, there is no such existence as "life," or of a life-force. "Life is a predicable, not an essence. It supposes a subject of which it is predicable. There can be no life unless something lives. It is not a thing by itself." Hodge argues that Mercersburg's organic concept and its subsequent pantheism ignores this irrefutable fact. It is the direct rejection of the dualism of mind and body. The effect can only be the "overthrow of Protestant, and it may be added, Christian faith."[814]

When Hodge began to recognize that idealism was actually taking hold

[813] Hodge, "Nature," pp. 111-115.

[814] Hodge, "Nature," pp. 123-132.

in the GRC, and that one of his own students and a significant German scholar ware successfully promoting idealism, he resolved to stop it before it spread. Hodge's review of the Principle of Protestantism was printed in the Messenger. In spite of the clearly critical tone of the review Richards argued that the review's appearance in the Messenger "indicates that not only the editor of the Messenger, but also the men at Mercersburg approved . . . ."[815] However, Hodge's review of Nevin's Mystical Presence was certainly not "approved" and was run by the Messenger in order to establish the text to which Nevin would give his stern reply in a series of articles. The conclusion can be drawn that with the publication of the Mystical Presence Hodge became fully aware of the importance of idealism in the Mercersburg system.

Initially the critical point of Hodge's attack was his labeling Nevin a follower of Schleiermacher. This left Nevin open to the same criticism which weakened Schleiermacher's case, namely his doctrine of sin. But Nevin made it clear that Hodge displayed his ignorance of German theology by not recognizing the place of Ullmann's essay. It was Ullmann who corrected Schleiermacher's error at this point, by seeking to articulate the doctrine of mystical union.[816]

[815] Richards, History, p. 258.

[816] Nichols, Romanticism, p. 97. Nevertheless, Nichols maintains that Hodge pressed his point which led Nevin to question his own exposition of Calvin's high view of the Eucharist. Nichols argues that he began to accept that part of Hodge's argument which held that God's absolute decrees remain central to Calvin's theological system. Nevin's response was to move more closely toward Melancthon, identifying him as the first theologian of the German Reformed Church. Yet even after Ebrard's work vindicated Nevin's understanding of Calvin, Nevin appears to have regarded Calvin's decretal theology as the prominent and guiding aspect of his system. This is evident in Nevin's review of Hodge's commentary on Ephesians (Mercersburg Review, 9, pp. 46-83 and pp. 192-245).

Hodge delivered his accusation that Mercersburg was idealist in the tradition of Schleiermacher in his review of the Mystical Presence. Yet prior to that review Hodge had been perceived by Mercersburg as a supporter of their churchly position. In 1843 he favorably reviewed Nevin's "German Language."[817] A year later the Princeton Review endorsed Nevin's The Anxious Bench writing that Nevin has Princeton's "hearty concurrence" that the New Measures as a "system" has no place in the Church.[818] (It must however be pointed out that there was a hint of diffidence in the review.) In 1847 there was a favorable while cautious review of Schaff's Anglogermanismus. Yet the reviewer was bold to denounce Schaff's suggestion that German Idealism has advanced the cause of Christian religion.[819] Finally, there was the review of Nevin's sermon on "The Church." Again, the tone is charitable but guarded, and the objective of the review is to simply present the views of Nevin.[820]

Hodge's open attack in his 1848 review of the Mystical Presence came as a shock to Mercersburg because Hodge was a member of the "more churchly wing of American Presbyterianism."[821] In addition, Hodge had been at least understanding of their position. Mercersburg simply did not realize

[817] Charles Hodge, ed., rev. of The German Language. An address delivered before the Goethean Literary Society of Marshall College, by John W. Nevin, Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review, 15 (1843), pp. 172-173.

[818] Hodge, rev. of "Anxious Bench," p. 137.

[819] Charles Hodge, ed., rev. of Der Anglogermanismus, eine Rede u.s.w., by Philip Schaf, Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review, 18 (1846), pp. 482-483.

[820] Charles Hodge, ed., rev. of The Church. A Sermon Preached at the Opening of the Synod of the German Reformed Church at Carlisle, October 15, 1846, by John W. Nevin, Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review, 19 (1847), p. 301.

[821] Nichols, Mercersburg, p. 245.

the degree to which Hodge despised German Idealism and would resist any attempt to encourage its development in America.

Nevin and Schaff proved willing and able to pick up the gauntlet dropped by a leading defender of American common sense realism's inductive theological approach. Nevin called his defense the fifth stage of the Mercersburg system. It began with his tract entitled "Antichrist, or the Spirit of Sect and Schism," in which he initiated

> a regular assault upon the sect system, as being in full antagonism to the true idea of the Church, and such a heresy as draws after it virtually in the end a Gnostic denial of the proper mystery of the Incarnation itself.[822]

James Good does not directly suggest that Nevin was referring to Hodge in the tract's title. But Good does make the point that Nevin was stirred to publish his pamphlet because of Hodge's charge that he was a follower of Schleiermacher.[823] Nichols suggests that the "Antichrist" referred to by Nevin was not an individual or a denomination but rather the sect system in general.[824] However, as Nevin set about to answer Hodge there is little doubt that he identified Hodge as spokesman for the forces of sectarianism.

That Nevin had Hodge in mind in writing "Antichrist" seems certain. But it remains a fact that the information in the tract is for the most part assembled from previous sermons. Nevertheless Nevin now recognizes Hodge's hatred of anything Continental. So he defends the advances made by the idealists, while allowing that the errors they made have been addressed

[822] Nevin, "Letter," p. 1.

[823] Good, History, p. 257.

[824] Nichols, Romanticism, p. 160.

by the new Mediating school of orthodox German theologians. And he appears perturbed that Hodge is unwilling to recognize the clear distinction between Hegel and Schleiermacher and their more orthodox Mediating "students," Dorner and Ullmann.[825]

Hodge's review of "Antichrist" did not wait as did his review of the Mystical Presence. That year Hodge charged Nevin with tediously repeating the heretical doctrine of the Mystical Presence in the "Antichrist." And as it was a summary of the Mystical Presence, Hodge felt justified in repeating his charge that Nevin was a disciple of Schleiermacher. Furthermore, neither Nevin, who used to be his friend, nor Schaff, have publicly denied the charge. Finally, Hodge denied the accusation that he depended on Nevin for his Reformation source material.[826]

Hodge's real purpose in writing this review is to argue that Nevin is in fact not as orthodox as the German Mediating theologians whom he claims to admire. Hodge writes, they are at least willing to admit that they have modified the traditional doctrine of the two natures of Christ. Nevin, in contrast, falsely represents his own confusion of the distinct natures of Christ by arguing that his is the traditional teaching. In this, concludes Hodge, we discover that the true source of Nevin's thinking is Hegelianism. And the worst of it is that poor Dr. Schaff, whom Hodge had hoped would be a conservative influence on Nevin, has thrown away "his own standpoint" and taken the position of Nevin because of "chivalry."

Hodge was referring to Schaff's professed stand with Nevin against

[825] Nevin, Antichrist, pp. 6-12.

[826] Charles Hodge, rev. of Antichrist; or the Spirit of Sect and Schism by John W. Nevin, Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review, 20 (1848), pp. 627-629.

Princeton. Schaff described Princeton's campaign against Mercersburg in an article in Der Kirchenfreund. He acknowledges that both Hodge and Alexander have studied in Germany, and have some familiarity with the material. Yet they use German learning only insofar as it suits them and "does not conflict with their traditional orthodoxy" (. . . wo es gerade fur ihre Zwecke passt und mit ihrer hergebrachten Orthodoxie nicht in Conflict gerath). Schaff concludes that Princeton warns the American against German philosophy "although they naively confess they do not understand it" (. . . obwohl sie hie und da schon das naive Gestandniss abgelegt haben, das sie davon eigentlich nichts verstehen).[827]

This came as a great disappointment to Schaff who thought that Hodge would be a moderate voice among Reformed people in allowing Mercersburg the option of an objective churchly tendency over both New and Old School positions.

Schaff's article placed him alongside Nevin in the leadership of the Mercersburg Movement. He identified himself as an instigator with the publication of the Principle of Protestantism. At that stage, he says, Princeton remained guarded but not in opposition. Likewise, Hodge's silence on Nevin's sermon on the Church at least implied indecision. But with Hodge's review of the Mystical Presence the truth comes out (Nun aber ist das visier gefallen). Now Princeton has set itself in opposition to Mercersburg. The result must be that the Kirchenfreund declare its stand with Nevin and terminate its friendly association with Princeton if need be. Schaff concludes that the time has come to take up "the weapons of self

[827] Schaff, "Princeton und Mercersburg," Der Deutsche Kirchenfreund, 1 (1848) pp. 154-155.

defense" (die woffen der Selbstvertheidigung).[828]

The sixth and final stage of the Mercersburg system was the publication of the Mercersburg Review.[829] Good believed that Nevin initiated publication because the size of his articles responding to Hodge were becoming too complex for the format of the Messenger, whose editors were resisting publication of his long and involved replies.[830] Nichols adds that Nevin had tried to find a more suitable journal to cover the debate, but failed. Thus he began publishing the Mercersburg Review.[831]

Prior to this Berg had given Nevin the opportunity to respond to Hodge and explain his views to the GRC and to the evangelical community in the Protestant Quarterly Review. Here Nevin sought to clear the air and establish once and for all the real issue at stake. He writes:

> What he [Hodge] is offended with in general is the conception of sacramental religion, as distinguished from a religion of mere individual spirituality . . . . Justification by faith and sacramental grace are, in his view, incompatible conceptions.[832]

Nevin concludes that the result of this is complete severance from catholic tradition as well as from traditional Reformed and Lutheran doctrine.

Nevin then turns to the charge that he is a disciple of Schleiermacher. He repeats his defense, saying that even the mediators in

[828] Schaff, "Princeton," pp. 156-157.

[829] Nevin, "Letter," p. 2.

[830] Good, History, p. 266.

[831] Nichols, Romanticism, p. 89.

[832] Nevin, "Sacramental," p. 131.

Germany know Schleiermacher's limitations. That trap is avoided by adopting the centrality of Christ and affirming real organic union with his person. This he affirms to be Athanasian. Furthermore, the trap is avoided by doing full justice "to the ideas of sin and atonement."[833]

Nevin writes that Hodge has criticised our doctrine which emphasizes the "person" of Christ. But it is precisely where clear distinction is made in a rigorous doctrine of the Trinity as produced by Dorner, that both the humanity and the divinity of Christ insure against the Unitarian heresy. In other words, clear up Schleiermacher's unorthodox view of the Trinity and his wonderful view of the person and work of Christ is usable. Secondly, having secured the doctrine of the person of Christ, it becomes absolutely necessary to conceive the way in which the divine mingles with the natural. For in order not to distort the historical person of Christ, a concept of "organic union" must be applied if the incarnation is to be not just an operation of the Holy Spirit (with the resulting confusion of the distinct persons of the Trinity), or merely a "theophany in the style of the Old Testament."[834]

Nevin asks, what is personality if not the unity of consciousness? Therefore, Christ's personality had to mediate (unite) his divinity and his humanity. Instead, Hodge's realistic dualism errs towards Nestorianism. This can be seen in Hodge's abstract formula of the Trinity. He understands God's relation to the world deistically. God becomes the grand designer of the great mechanism of nature. Creation's telos is God's decree, which comes from outside of the world and breaks in. Nor is mankind an evolving

[833] Nevin, "Sacramental," p. 132.

[834] Nevin, "Sacramental," pp. 133-134.

organism, but merely the sum total of "living units placed on the same theatre . . . for moral trial." Here God simply imputes the sin of Adam arbitrarily according to his "sovereign pleasure." And likewise he imputes redemption. Nevin writes:

> The incarnation is an expedient, contrived to solve the problem of the atonement, and must be carefully held aloof from the whole process of the world's history under any other view, lest it should lose this 'ex machina' character.[835]

Nevin believes that the effect of this mechanistic view is to make the Old Testament saints stand in the same relationship to God as the saints of the New Testament. "The person of Christ itself, as such, forms not the specific revelation of the gospel, but simply his word and work as instrumentally disclosed through its agency." The result of Christ's work derives not from his life or who he is, so much as from his "theophanic form, in which it was thought good that the Word should at this time appear." The virtue of Christ's sacrifice is imputed by way of "divine thought," and Christ, as seated at God's right hand, is stationary and involved in the world only by proxy through the work of the Holy Spirit, as was the case in the Old Testament. This, Nevin insists, is a distortion of Calvinism.[836]

With the publication of the Mercersburg Review Nevin continued the debate. In his masterful "Doctrine of the Reformed Church on the Lord's Supper" Nevin restates the basic thesis of the Mystical Presence and accuses Hodge of manipulating the sources to fit his theology. Hodge concludes that since most of the Reformed doctrines during the sixteenth

[835] Nevin, "Sacramental," p. 136.

[836] Nevin, "Sacramental," p. 137.

century were attempts at compromise with the Lutherans, none of them reflects the "true source" of the Reformed spirit. Indeed, says Nevin, what Hodge is trying to do is to understand Reformed doctrine according to "the reigning Puritan faith of the present time." The result is a view which effectively states that:

> The only union with Christ which the Reformed doctrine allows, is one that holds under a purely mental form between him and our souls, through the intervention of the Holy Ghost, exclusively altogether of his human life.[837]

Nevin goes on to defend his view that Calvin and the Reformed tradition sustain the real presence of Christ as well as real union with Christ. In answer to Hodge's suggestion that Calvin's language maintaining the real presence was hypocritical and merely an attempt by Calvin to placate the Lutherans, Nevin ridicules Hodge's confusion by depicting a debate between Westphal and Calvin. Nevin argues that Westphal used the Consensus Tigurinus for the same purpose as Hodge. Both would discredit Calvin. But with Hodge, Calvin is characterized as a Swiss trying to please the Lutherans, rather than a Lutheran compromising with the Swiss.[838]

By 1851 Princeton is automatically suspicious of anything produced by Mercersburg. Yet J.A. Alexander's review of Schaff's Geschichte der Christlichen Kirche suggests that Schaff may still be saved from Nevin's influence. Alexander wrote:

> The confidence produced by these professions may have been impaired, in certain quarters, by his peculiar views on other points, and by his real or apparent implication in the doctrinal developments, which are

[837] John W. Nevin, "The Doctrine of the Reformed Church on the Lord's Supper," Mercersburg Review, 2 (1850), p. 444.

[838] Nevin, "Doctrine," p. 487.

> supposed to have their centre and their source at Mercersburg. But until explicitly forbidden by himself, we shall continue to claim him as a well armed and a well skilled champion of the genuine old Reformation principles . . . .[839]

Alexander allows that Schaff's peculiar way of expressing his views may stem from his familiarity with "certain forms of unbelief," especially those of Schleiermacher, where Schaff expresses the faith in terms of life rather than doctrine. This, says Alexander, reveals Mercersburg's tendency to minimize doctrinal discrepancies.[840]

In 1852, with the completion of the fourth volume of the Mercersburg Review, Nevin published his "Closing Notice," stating that he had completed the "mission" which he had begun. The Review itself would continue, but he would no longer be its editor.[841]

HODGE'S CONTINUED ATTACKS

Although Nevin wrote that his mission was completed, Hodge was not finished with his. Before he could firmly establish his dualistic realism in America he felt it necessary to eradicate the influence of German Idealism, especially as it was now being uniquely applied to Mercersburg's doctrine of the Church. Thus Hodge set out to refute Nevin's work on Cyprian. His argument is simply stated. Nevin is wrong to believe that the Church must "include the idea of a visible society organized under one definite form." Indeed, the "bond of union may be spiritual." The Church is simply "the communion of saints, the body of those who are united to Christ

[839] J. Addison Alexander, rev. of Geschichte der Christlichen Kirche by Philipp Schaff, Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review, 23 (1851), pp. 650-651.

[840] Alexander, Geschichte, p. 654.

[841] John W. Nevin, "Closing Notice," Mercersburg Review, 4 (1852), p. 620

by the indwelling of his Spirit."[842]

For proof of this Hodge sets before his readers a series of inductive arguments. They consist of what Hodge believed were the textual and historical "evidences" that his position is the "true" position.

Hodge concludes that the pristine apostolic church was transformed "by degrees" into the apostate church of Rome. In order to protect its authority it conceived the doctrine "that all the attributes of the Church belonged to the visible society of professed Christians." However, originally, when the Church was a small unit in a world of pagans and Jews, it was their common faith in Jesus Christ which made them catholic. But with the appearance of schismatics, the leaders of the Church no longer located that unity where the Bible did, in the "indwelling of the Holy Spirit," nor did they locate it in the "profession of the same faith," nor in the unity of the sacraments, nor in the same form of government. Rather they placed it in the episcopate. And the perpetrator of this "perversion of the true doctrine" was Cyprian.[843]

Hodge claims that "This was the parent corruption, the fruitful source of almost all the other evils which have afflicted the Church." It is this distorted idea of the Church which sees Christ as having an historical existence "exclusively" in a particular human society which can be identified among "a large class of the disciples of Schleiermacher in Germany and in this country. It is one, it seems, which the strictest

[842] Charles Hodge, "Idea of the Church," Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review, 25 (1853), pp. 249-252.

[843] Hodge, "Idea," pp. 355-356.

Romanist can adopt."[844]

Two years later, in an effort to stem the tide of idealism's advance, Hodge criticised Schaff's History of the Apostolic Church (1853). He warned his readers that it contained "insidious principles of error," all of which tend in the direction of Rome. In this article Hodge depicts Schaff as the helpless victim of Germany's chronic errors of idealism, all of which stem from the "self-deifying Hegel." But much worse than Hegel's influence on Schaff is the influence of Nevin. Nevin, Hodge concludes, is certainly going to Rome, and would drag Schaff with him if he can.[845]

Nevertheless, Hodge believes that Schaff differs in essential matters from Nevin. Schaff is afraid to admit publicly to these so as not to offend his friend and colleague. But the cost of Schaff's loyalty has been high. It has cost him the support of the Protestant community. Thus it is unfortunate that the press has made Schaff out to be the perpetrator of the Mercersburg errors. Rather, Schaff has come under the sway of the "older" and "stronger" Nevin.[846]

Hodge claims that the path of Mercersburg's downfall and its inevitable defection to Rome is the "dangerous road" of philosophy. Hodge writes, "There is a strong affinity between the speculative system of development, according to which every thing that is, is true and rational, and the Romish idea of a self-evolving infallible Church."[847]

[844] Hodge, "Idea," pp. 357-358.

[845] Charles Hodge, "Dr. Schaff's Apostolic Church," rev. of History of the Apostolic Church by Philip Schaff, Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review, 26 (1854), pp. 149-151.

[846] Hodge, "Dr. Schaff," pp. 151-152.

[847] Hodge, "Dr. Schaff," pp. 152-153.

Now according to Hodge, unlike Nevin, Schaff has not yet completely succumbed to this Roman lie. His lifelines remain his strong affirmation of justification by faith and the authority of Scripture. But in other areas he has embraced what Hodge calls "anti-protestant principles." These principles are systematically rejected by Hodge in the following manner.

First, Hodge rejects the idea of the evolution of doctrine. The system of doctrine was supernaturally revealed and recorded in the Bible. Second, Hodge rejects the notion that doctrine matures in the work of individuals of the Church; rather he insists that doctrine is static and that individuals mature into its understanding. Third, Hodge rejects the idea of continuous evolution into ever higher stages of the Church's development, arguing that the dark ages were morally and spiritually blighted. Finally, Hodge rejects the idea that the life of Christ is mediated through successive ages of the Church, but that the individual believer gets "his life" by direct connection with Christ and "not through the Church."[848]

Schaff, says Hodge, suffers from three typically Germanic fallacies. First, that the Church was complete from the beginning, with internal life principles which guide its proper development (the organic concept). Second, Schaff has a pantheistic base. And third, his idea of Christianity is that it is not based on "a doctrine," but on "a life."[849]

Three years later, in 1857, Nevin sought to expose Hodge as an essentially Puritan theologian who retains, for his own purposes, an antiquated Calvinist interpretation of life, God and nature. He wanted to

[848] Hodge, "Dr. Schaff," pp. 157-163.

[849] Hodge, "Dr. Schaff," pp. 167-171.

demonstrate that Hodge interprets Scripture according to an inductive method which "sublimates" nature in grace. And the technique chosen by Nevin to prove his accusation was Hodge's interpretation of the Pauline letter to the Ephesians.

Nevin argued that Hodge uses Calvin to create an abstract world in which it is impossible to recognize Paul's own concept of the Church as a real life and force in the world of nature. For Hodge, the Christian life is completely outside the world, existing in the theological imaginations of the Calvinist school. Religion exists as a sphere of grace which enters the world through an eternal decree issuing from the unfathomable mind of God.[850]

From Nevin's article it becomes clear that even after the publication of Ebrard's work, Mercersburg did not find Calvin in complete harmony with their theology. Nevin criticises Calvin and by way of Calvin, Hodge, for his mere lip service to the idea of the "visible" Church. He quotes the Institutes and Hodge to demonstrate that for them it is not the Church which mediates an individual's salvation, but the abstract decree of election. He writes:

> Their voluntary union with Christ by faith, is not the ground of their federal union, but, on the contrary, their federal union is the ground of their voluntary union.[851]

Nevin concludes that Hodge and Calvin do not conform to St. Paul on the doctrine of election. Rather, Nevin can see instead a Pauline idea of divine foreknowledge present in the letter to the Ephesians. And despite its logical limitations, a doctrine of divine foreknowledge is a better

[850] Nevin, "Ephesians," pp. 46-83 and pp. 192-245.

[851] Nevin, "Ephesians," p. 215.

approximation of St. Paul's own position than the doctrine of predestination.

Hodge resumed his defensive assault on Mercersburg in 1860. By then, however, Hodge had modified his views, just as Mercersburg's ideas were in constant evolution. Hodge now allows that Christianity is both doctrine and life. He also maintains that the object of theological propositions is the person of Christ. But he remains adamant in his challenge that the German Mediating theology is "almost entirely foreign" to Americans and Englishmen. It is in itself merely a splitting of the factions of the followers of Schleiermacher, and those of Hegel and Schelling. And it is in the most bewitched caldron of this school (e.g. Ullmann) that "Mercersburg" stews. The misleading program was begun by Rauch in his Psychology with the rejection of the orthodox idea of the dualism of body and soul. Nevin merely continued Rauch's teaching. [852]

Another change in Hodge's position is that now he recognizes that Mercersburg is not entirely pantheistic, at least in intent. He writes:

> The object of the whole system is to find some middle ground between pantheism and dualism, that is between the doctrine that God and the world are one, and the doctrine that they are two.[853]

Nevertheless, Hodge concludes that they have no middle ground upon which to stand. They must choose one or the other. And their criticism of orthodox dualism demonstrates their drift away from Reformed tradition. Hodge writes, "It is a wonderful hallucination of self-conceit which leads these builders to condemn as rationalists, and, worse, yet, as Puritans,

[852] Charles Hodge, "What Is Christianity," Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review, 32 (1860), pp. 118-125.

[853] Hodge, "Christianity," p. 130.

those who will not trust their souls to their cobweb edifice."[854]

Hodge believed that Mercersburg's answer to the question, "What is Christianity," was ultimately Ullmann's teaching that Christianity is "the theanthropic life of Christ." It is the already outmoded Mediating school's philosophy which teaches that human development became impeded by sin and needed assistance, ab extra, by God himself. This assistance came as God united himself to his creation organically through Christ.[855]

Hodge's philosophical criticism of Mercersburg became more informed as well. It appears he is now able to understand idealism sufficiently to offer his first engaging criticism that, if our union with Christ is purely organic, like that of an oak to an acorn, then the relationship is entirely impersonal, and Christ becomes merely the inevitable form towards which the seed must develop itself.[856]

It appears that Nevin and Hodge never resolved their differences or their animosity, although they appeared to have tried. George Schriver discovered a letter to Charles Hodge from Nevin dated 1872. Schriver describes the letter in an article entitled, "Passages in Friendship." Yet the tone of the letter is hardly friendly. Nevin begins by disavowing his association with certain Hegelian ideas which he allows are certainly pantheistic. And he complains of being constantly misquoted and villainized by the religious press.[857] He adds that Hodge is wrong to depict him as

[854] Hodge, "Christianity," p. 130.

[855] Hodge, "Christianity," p. 157.

[856] Hodge, "Christianity," p. 158.

[857] George Schriver, "Passages in Friendship: John W. Nevin to Charles Hodge, 1872," Journal of Presbyterian History, 58 (1980), pp. 120-121.

indirectly denying the divinity of Christ by overstressing his humanity. Nevin wrote:

> It could hardly fail to be known to you moreover, that even if there had been any ambiguity in the utterances of the Myst. Pres. a quarter of a century ago (which there was not) my uniform public teaching and preaching ever since has been more than enough to put to shame any such charges as you here bring against me. No one probably in our American Church has more loudly or constantly than myself proclaimed the Incarnation of the Son of God in the sense of the Apostles' Creed.[858]

In contrast, it appears that Schaff was able to reconcile himself to Hodge and Princeton. Schaff wrote in 1890 that he had had "a delightful personal acquaintance" with Hodge. But ironically, in the same sentence, Schaff remembered Hodge for perhaps the last thing Hodge would have recognized about himself, which was what Schaff called his "liberalizing the Calvinistic theology."[859]

NEVIN'S VINDICATION

Hodge's review of the Mystical Presence put in doubt Nevin's description of the Reformed Church doctrine of the Lord's Supper. In effect Hodge was rejecting Nevin's conclusion that the tradition of the Reformed Church maintains Christ's real presence in the Eucharist. And while Nevin's argument was clearly the stronger one, Hodge's review led many to challenge Nevin's findings. That challenge was answered in vindication of Nevin with the publication of the second volume of the German church historian Ebrard's, Das Dogma vom heiligen Abendmahl und seine Geschichte.

The notice of Ebrard's findings and the statement of Nevin's vindication were published in the Messenger in 1848, in the midst of the

[858] Schriver, "Passages," p. 121.

[859] Schaff, Creed, p. 49.

flurry of articles being published in the Messenger by Nevin refuting the charges made by Hodge in his review of the Mystical Presence. Prior to these articles Ebrard, in Germany, had read and reviewed the Mystical Presence. That review was reproduced by Schaff in 1850 in his Kirchenfreund.[860]

Ebrard's review first appeared in Germany in Studien und Kritiken (1850). Here Ebrard affirms the doctrine of the real, mystical presence and congratulates Nevin for rediscovering with him the authentic teaching of the Reformed churches.[861]

Ebrard's second volume became Nevin's most crucial secondary source for his "Doctrine of the Reformed Church on the Lord's Supper" (1850). Nevin used it not only to vindicate his position in the Mystical Presence but to add that Ebrard goes further than Nevin by suggesting that even Zwingli had a vague concept of real union with Christ which is evident in his writings.[862]

In more recent studies of the sacramental debate, Nichols argues that Nevin's successful refutation of Hodge rested partly on Ebrard's volume on the sixteenth-century sacramental controversies, and that the subsequent five-year controversy proved Nevin's thesis that the defection from the Reformed sacramental position could be "observed in American Protestantism."[863] Furthermore, Nichols believes that Ebrard helped to

[860] Weekly Messenger of the German Reformed Church, No. 40, (1848).

[861] Schaf, "Dr. Nevin," pp. 204-206.

[862] Nevin, "The Doctrine," pp. 455-462. Nevin writes that Ebrard's book "corroborates and sustains, with unanswerable evidence, every material historical position affirmed in the Mystical Presence" (p. 456).

[863] Nichols, Romanticism, p. 91.

soften Nevin's view of Zwingli.[864]

More recently Brian Gerrish has written that Nevin's confidence in his interpretation of the Reformed doctrine of the real presence received a boost from the publishing of Ebrard's second volume on the history of eucharistic doctrine. Ebrard concluded that after the Wittenberg Concord (1536) a third sacramental theology emerged which was neither Lutheran nor Zwinglian in character. Gerrish writes:

> Not wholly coincident with any one confession, it was advocated by both Melancthon and Calvin, and it formed an important bond of unity between the Lutheran and the Reformed branches of evangelical Protestantism.[865]

It was this third sacramental theology which Nevin argued should be the Reformed model of modern sacramental practice, and not the theology of Zwinglian memorialism as represented by Charles Hodge.

THE ANGLICAN CONTROVERSY

Mercersburg's sacramental position led many to believe that Mercersburg was influenced by the Anglican high-church movement. Even today scholars and students continue to argue the degree of influence to be attributed to Oxford, Pusey and Newman. Yet the confrontation between Anglican high-church practices and Mercersburg, primarily in Schaff's early reflections on his visit to Oxford, the liturgical committee's use of the Anglican rite and Nevin's correspondence with Wilberforce and certain Episcopalians, shows a conscious attempt by Mercersburg to affirm the creedal (confessional) and liturgical strength of Anglicans, while criticising the high-church movement's claim of an historically apostolic

[864] Nichols, Mercersburg, p. 245.

[865] Gerrish, "Flesh," pp. 64-65.

episcopacy.

Ostensibly the controversy began with Nevin's reading the Oxford tract material. Appel wrote that Nevin read one of the Oxford Tracts at Pittsburgh. Nevin found the writer of the tract to be a weak if enthusiastic writer on a subject of immediate interest to Christianity. But other than expressing an interest in the topic, Nevin was unwilling to support the tractarian cause in America.[866]

A similiar critical interest was demonstrated in the early writing of Schaff. In 1843 Schaff wrote of his suspicion of the Puseyite doctrine of an infallible Church. Yet what he found most objectionable was the revisionism that arbitrarily established divine authority with the Church of England.[867]

Yet Schaff found room to accept, on condition, the direction of Oxford's ecclesiastical reform. Schaff could see the bishopric constituted spiritually, such that every priest would be seen as a follower of the apostles. However, the Puseyites insisted on maintaining the difference between bishop and priest, allowing that only priests ordained by bishops could administer the sacraments. Schaff argued that this would never be acceptable to Lutherans and Reformed. Schaff complained that even St. Paul was ordained by a presbyter and not a bishop.[868]

Schaff concluded that Pusey's error was to elevate the institution of apostolic succession over the principle of the spiritual succession of the community of believers. Thus Oxford's failure lay in placing confidence in

[866] Appel, The Life, p. 88.

[867] Schaf, "Zwölf Tage," p. 212.

[868] Schaf, "Zwölf Tage," pp. 213-215

a structure without developing the idea within the structure. Schaff called it a mere form without a soul. In contrast Schaff argued that German ecclesiology had developed itself to the degree that it could criticize the flimsy and unscientific concept of the Reformation's recovery of original Christianity, and yet maintain the idea of the Church's true historical succession and development through the Reformation.[869]

Nevin's general criticism of Anglican ecclesiology is scattered throughout his early writings. Eventually he takes direct aim at Pusey in his introduction to Schaff's Principle of Protestantism. Here he defends Mercersburg from the criticism that they were moving towards Oxford. He writes that Schaff's book will put to rest any such notion. Nor will it be welcome by Puseyites and the papists as "a plea in their favor." Rather, he says, it is one of the most "effective" arguments "in opposition to their cause." Says Nevin, neither Oxford nor Puritan theories are acceptable to Mercersburg.[870].

In 1850 Nevin initiated the protracted debate which was the substance of the controversy between Mercersburg and the high-church Anglican and Episcopalian movement with his article, "Wilberforce On the Incarnation." Here he leaves no question as to the source of Mercersburg's theological orientation:

> It is only ridiculous however to fancy the English Church, or the Episcopal Church in America, on any sort of parallel and level, as regards theological science, with German Protestantism under its better form.[871]

[869] Schaf, "Zwölf Tage," pp. 216-220.

[870] Schaff, Principle, pp. 9-15.

[871] John W. Nevin, "Wilberforce On the Incarnation," Mercersburg Review, 2 (1850), p. 164.

Nevin regarded scientific method to be as necessary as an orthodox and churchly discipline in producing good theology. He concluded that if recourse is made merely to outward authority, without regard for science, then "it were better for us to fall back at once fully and wholly into the arms of Romanism."[872]

Nevin simply regarded Wilberforce's theology to be German-inspired in its christology, and in terms of its ecclesiology, an appeal to Anglican antiquity. Nevin maintained that the source of Wilberforce's thinking was the German theologian Moehler. So the claim that Wilberforce's theology was original and brilliant was unconvincing.[873]

In Nevin's recognition of the shared source of the substance of their christological and sacramental understanding, he was able to support Wilberforce to the extent that he published and praised Wilberforce's essay on the "Holy Eucharist" (Mercersburg Review, 1854). Nevertheless, in Wilberforce's search for Anglican continuity with ancient eucharistic practice, Nevin remained sceptical. Even if the ancient practice could be clearly identified, Nevin doubted whether it could be imposed on today's Church. Nevin asked Wilberforce if instead Calvinist eucharistic theology offers not only continuity with the past, but a position which could bring the Church together today. After all, Calvin maintained the real presence, but not locally. And Calvin would not allow the sacred rite to be a sacrifice. This, concluded Nevin, while not a compromised solution, nevertheless could be a position from which a compromise might be developed. Apparently Wilberforce appreciated the debate. When Schaff

[872] Nevin, "Wilberforce," pp. 164-165.

[873] Nichols, Mercersburg, pp. 77-78.

visited Europe (1853-1854) he discovered that Wilberforce enjoyed reading the Mercersburg Review, especially the articles by Nevin.[874]

Nevin's initial article on Wilberforce was followed by his "Anglican Crisis" (1851). Once again Nevin focused on Anglicanism's attempt to locate "church spirit" in the episcopacy. Nevin charged that the high-church Anglicans held a mechanical idea of apostolic succession. Nevin's article was answered in the Episcopalian journal, the Church Review and by W.A. Muhlenberg in The Evangelical Catholic. Recently John F. Woolverton has reported on that debate. Says Woolverton, Nevin's extended rebuttal to these replies proved too much for the Episcopalians. The rebuttal was none other than Nevin's articles on the early Church.[875]

Woolverton has argued that Nevin's articles on the Church raised a serious question concerning the reliability of the case of Oxford and Pusey. Nevin felt that the high-church deception was that the corruptions of Rome could be attributed to the rise of the papacy and that prior to Nicaea the forms were pure and effectively identical with the practice of the Church of England.[876]

Ironically the Church Review reacted to Nevin's articles by simply ignoring his position, calling him a "papist." To his credit, Muhlenberg rejected the Review's accusation, saying Nevin was altogether unlike Newman. And while Muhlenberg did not accept Nevin's conclusion and offered his own theory of the development of the Church, he respected Nevin's

[874] Nichols, Romanticism, pp. 228-231.

[875] Woolverton, "Ecclesiology," p. 363. It is unfortunate that this otherwise superb article makes nothing of Nevin's exchange with Wilberforce.

[876] Nevin, "Early Christianity: Third," pp. 14-15.

scholarship and clear reasoning.[877]

Unfortunately Woolverton omitted from his article Nevin's "Word of Explanation" to the Episcopalians which followed their reactions to his articles on the early Church. Here Nevin admitted that his sources were not primary. But he believed that his research was historically accurate. Furthermore he suspected that the Review had missed his point. Thus he summarized it as clearly and as briefly as he felt he could. He states that the Church's unity in the early years was seen as indispensable to "the mystery of its existence and power." This unity materialized in the episcopate as the office of Apostolic succession. The original center of the episcopate, as the college of Apostles, was St. Peter. Likewise the center became the Roman see as the cathedra Petri for the "universal episcopate" and therefore for the whole Church. Thus Nevin concluded:

> This we are very sure is not modern Puritanism. But neither does it suit modern Anglicanism. After all, however, it is only one phase among many of the broad differences there is, [sic] between Cyprian's Christianity and the Anglican system. The two schemes have in fact very little in common.[878]

A second controversy with an Episcopalian bishop began in the late 1870's. This time Nevin's opponent was Arthur Coxe. Coxe had tried to establish, solely by Scripture, that "the ecclesiological constitution of the Episcopal church, was since founded in holy writ, right for all time."[879] Nevin's reply repeated ideas he had held for a long time. He argued that the question of the Church could not be answered

[877] Woolverton, "Ecclesiology," pp. 372-375.

[878] John W. Nevin, "A Word of Explanation," Mercersburg Review, 4 (1852), p. 205.

[879] Woolverton, "Ecclesiology," p. 376.

ecclesiologically, but only theologically. He maintained that the unhistorical approach of simply identifying oneself with the apostolic Church ignores the eschatological dimension; "the ongoing power of Christ in the world." Furthermore, Nevin thought that Coxe's use of the "organic law" of the episcopacy as it developed in apostolic succession was erroneous. Coxe's idea of "organic law" was mechanical and supported by a misapplication of the organic concept's terminology.[880]

Woolverton argues that Nevin's thin critique of Coxe at this point suffers from his imposing his own Hegelian concept of organic development on Coxe. Woolverton is much more amenable to Nevin's more "telling" criticism that ultimately Coxe and episcopalians like Coxe, abandon their Christian freedom and become slaves to "ordinances." In effect "Coxe confused faith with belief, consent with assent."[881]

Not surprisingly Mercersburg and German scientific theology were unable to unseat Anglicanism's historical argument from its place of honor. Indeed the argument became part of the four articles of reunion from the Lambeth Conferences (1867, 1878, and 1888) as the fourth principle of the "historic episcopate." Schaff shared Nevin's conclusions concerning the unscientific nature of this principle. In 1893 he condemned the principle as "the stumbling-block to all non-episcopalians . . . ." He believed that it would "never be conceded by them [non-episcopalians] as a condition of Church unity." Instead, he argued, the important first step depends not on the Anglicans, but on the Greeks and Catholics "coming to agreement on the

[880] Woolverton, "Ecclesiology," p. 381.

[881] Woolverton, "Ecclesiology," p. 381.

question of eternal Procession and the Bishops of Rome." On the part of Protestants the first step must be the end of their rejection of the Orthodox and Roman Catholic faiths. Schaff concluded that very little depends initially on the Anglicans, except as they recognize themselves as another Protestant denomination which developed out of Roman Catholicism and not before it.[882]

THE LITURGICAL CONTROVERSY

Many scholars and students today still consider English liturgical consciousness and the Book Of Common Prayer to be the most important Anglican influence on Mercersburg. The Book Of Common Prayer and the Catholic and Apostolic Church's prayer book were the two most direct outside sources used by Schaff and the liturgical committee in producing the GRC's 1866 Order Of Worship. In this Anglican liturgical practice represents a significant influence on Mercersburg. It also increased criticism of the liturgical committee's goals by stigmatizing its work as another Mercersburg attempt at Romanizing. Such criticism fueled the controversy which waged for thirty years before peace was finally won. However, it is important to note that for Mercersburg the liturgy consciously emerged from the denominational leader's historical and theological reflection on the Reformed tradition's experience of God in worship. In this Mercersburg remained resolutely Reformed. The perplexing causes of the liturgical controversy within the denomination cannot be fairly attributed simply to sympathy with an un-Reformed Anglican or Roman Catholic principle of worship as transcending or preceding theology as a direct encounter with God in worship. For Mercersburg, liturgical forms

[882] Schaff, Reunion, pp. 21-30.

needed to reflect the denomination's theological experience. Thus the source of the controversy must be seen once again as lodged in a commitment to a theology and liturgical practice directly antithetical to that of Mercersburg, and to a suspicion that anything produced by Mercersburg was Romanist. Such reactionary theology emphasized individual personal piety. It resisted the idea of corporate identity as cast in an ecclesiastical constitution crowned by an established liturgy. Its inclination was naturally toward a directory of worship prepared for the pulpit and not the pew.

Since the record of the liturgical controversy has recently been the most discussed aspect of Mercersburg history, a detailed description would be redundant. The studies by Maxwell, Mitchell and Mast are three examples. Yet what is missing from the current liturgical histories is a discussion of the controversial philosophical decisions made by Mercersburg which supported their liturgical work. These decisions are the subject of this section.

With Nevin's switch to German Idealism came also a switch in his perception of public worship. As the corporate and universal character of worship became paramount, its personal or subjective aspect receded into the background. This objective principle demanded, for Nevin, liturgical worship.

Nevin articulated this demand in 1847 in his preface to his published sermon on the Church (p. 4). A few years later this view surfaces in Nevin's lectures on theology in which the ongoing controversy with the Scottish tradition of John Dick continues to force him to deviate from the standard realist text and to present his own phenomenological ideas. As the lectures take up the question of liturgy and forms of prayer the clash

between the system of Nevin and that of Dick is evident.

Dick's Lectures conclude that while public prayer must be corporate, worship should not be set down in "forms" nor should it be liturgical in character. Dick bases his argument on the silence of Scripture on "forms of prayer." Furthermore, he maintains that forms are absent from the record of the early church, since clearly "they interfere with the office of the Holy Spirit . . . . " Finally, says Dick, uniformity encourages dullness of mind. The mind needs "to be kept awake."[883]

As to liturgy as it exists in the Anglican rite, Dick concludes,

> If this wonderful liturgy be brought to the test of Scripture and sound reason, its vaunted excellence will vanish as a dream of fancy. To say nothing of the superstitious rites which it inculcates, and the false doctrine which it teaches . . . . [884]

It was at this point of his lectures on theology that Nevin amended Dick's conclusion, adding his own. Nevin contends that freedom and order in worship were balanced from the very beginning. He maintains that Dick's conclusions, which held that true spiritual worship is inward and that liturgical worship is empty and merely outward, are false. He argues that inward worship can never properly reflect "the general life of the Church." Proper liturgical worship seeks to bring the individual into the objective stream of the Church's life. In this an individual obtains freedom by identifying with the denomination as it expresses itself amid the whole life of the Church.[885]

[883] Dick, Lectures, pp. 436-439.

[884] Dick, Lectures, p. 440.

[885] Erb, Nevin's Classroom Lectures, pp. 410-422.

Nevin's views on the liturgical question continued to conceive of a "higher" liturgical expression as his commitment to evangelical catholicity grew stronger. Yet the early philosophical principles remained. In 1856 the Mercersburg Review published "The Church Year." Here the argument supporting the liturgical calendar was based on the organic model. The sacred year was said to "grow" organically out of the "religious constitution of man" through an organic link with nature. The religious calendar's function is to coordinate properly the two spheres of spirit and nature which constitute existence. This coordination is effective as the calendar places the proper conjunction of spirit and nature in the human personality. Thus the Christian calendar is the working analogy that

> . . . the life of man is required to complete itself in religion, as an order of existence above nature, and involving relations which go altogether beyond the present world.[886]

The idea of the divine incarnating itself in nature became the single most relevant philosophical event for Mercersburg theology. Liturgically this event became the central act of worship as existing in the consecration of the sacred supper.[887]

While the principal task of constructing the liturgy fell to Schaff, the task of the liturgy's defense before the denomination fell to Nevin. The defense consisted in identifying the principal aims of the liturgy as the necessary movement of the Church if it were to achieve spiritual and

[886] John W. Nevin, "The Church Year," Mercersburg Review, 8 (1856), p. 461.

[887] Scott F. Brenner, "Philip Schaff the Liturgist," Christendom, 11 (1946), p. 452.

cultural success in the future.[888]

THE DORNER CONTROVERSY

The opponents of that liturgically influenced cultural renaissance began publishing a monthly journal designed to resist the liturgical program sponsored by the Mercersburg Movement. As support and pressure for the new liturgy was applied by Mercersburg to the denomination at the 1866 meeting of the Synod, the anti-liturgical forces were busy developing their own strategy for stopping the spread of Mercersburg theology. These forces were led by the Reformed Church Monthly's editors, J.H. Bomberger and J.H. Good. Their strategy was to take direct aim at the new liturgy, describing it as Romanist or Episcopalian and not Reformed. For their support they engaged the famous German theologian, Isaac Dorner.

Dorner was perceived as the ideal candidate because Nevin had cited Dorner as in full agreement with Mercersburg on the question of the person of Christ at the 1866 Synod meeting. Dorner's response to Nevin's association with his ideas came in his 1867 "Yearbook for German Theology" which was published in the Monthly. The article took issue with Nevin on several points.

Nevin lost no time in replying. His response included articles published in the Mercersburg Review and the Messenger. In 1867 Nevin began his reply by describing the actions of Bomberger and Good as reprehensible. Their deliberate distortion of the liturgical issues before the foreign Isaac Dorner was, to him, a sham which hid the distance between the Puritan worship of the anti-liturgical group and the liturgical practice of the

[888] Nevin, "The Church Movement," Reformed Church Messenger, 33, No. 32 (1868); No. 37 (1868); No. 41 (1868).

Evangelical Church of Prussia. Indeed, Nevin complained, Mercersburg's liturgical ideas differ only mildly from the current German forms endorsed by Dorner, while the liturgical practice defended by the Monthly would be impossible for Dorner and the German church to accept.

Nevin questioned the integrity of Dorner's former approval of a liturgical renaissance in the GRC and his endorsement of their use of a pew liturgy. Furthermore, he wondered why Dorner had supported Mercersburg's sacramental historiography. But now Nevin turns to this new rejection of Mercersburg's high view of the ministry as the means by which the Monthly's "Puritans" argue that Dorner stands with them against Mercersburg on the sacramental question. In spite of his suspicion of the alliance, he is ready to take up the question of Dorner's theology in his "Our Relations To Germany."[889]

Dorner's earlier and more direct criticism of Nevin had appeared in the August, 1868 issue of the Monthly. "The Liturgical Conflict in the Reformed Church of North America, with Special References to Fundamental Evangelical Doctrines" was poorly translated from "Der Liturgische Kampf in der Deutsch-Reformirten Kirche von Nord-Amerika," Jahrbucher fur deutsche Theologie, and was prompted by the special alarm of certain American students in Berlin who called Dorner's attention to Mercersburg's alleged liturgical excesses.

Dorner's article begins with a review of the liturgical conflict. He then moves to the heart of the theological dispute. While Dorner agrees with Nevin that Christian "knowledge" depends on the correctness of the knower's point of view, and that correctness also depends on its emanation from the christocentric position, it is not correct to say, as Nevin does,

[889] Nevin, "Relations," p. 629.

that "there could be no idea of God which is not inimical to Christology." This is to say that Dorner believes that for Nevin any idea of God other than the christological idea is rationalistic, and thus false. While Dorner is sympathetic to the central concern of christology, he believes Nevin carries this principle too far. In this Nevin has drifted away from his Reformed roots. Although the proper perception must be christological, the correct position from which that perception must proceed is first of all one of faith, since faith allows the distinction between the perception (that is, Christ), while still allowing the focus to be on Christ. Dorner believed that Nevin missed this essential point.[890]

Indeed, Dorner states that Nevin fails even to raise this point. For Nevin, Christ reveals himself directly, as the center of faith, prior to the believer's apprehension or reflection on the contents of that faith. It is as if no conversion is necessary in coming to true knowledge of Christ. Nevin writes as though Christ is a self-evident principle, and "as though every man in Christendom understood of himself that Christ was this centre."[891]

Dorner's criticism is of Nevin's starting point. Nevin does not begin with how one becomes a Christian, or with how faith works to bring conviction and assurance. Dorner concludes,

> His telescope of Christian inquiry has not Christology for its object, in order to discern it as the centre of the whole, but it forms, one knows not how, the assumed condition even for theological thinking.[892]

[890] J. A. Dorner, "The Liturgical Conflict in the Reformed Church of North America, with Special Reference to Fundamental Evangelical Doctrines," Reformed Church Monthly, 1, No. 8 (1868), p. 342.

[891] Dorner, "Liturgical Conflict," p. 345.

[892] Dorner, "Liturgical Conflict," p. 345.

Dorner quickly adds that this is merely a rebuke of method on his part. Still, the effect of Nevin's method is to wrest christology from its proper place in scientific exposition and to steal from it its place in dogmatics. Thus Dorner echos what might have been Schleiermacher's criticism. God and man precede the incarnation. This fact must supply the christological principle, otherwise Christ is the condition of God, as well as man.[893]

Nor does Nevin recognize the need for the apriori condition which is the idea of "life in Christ." This objective idea must precede the subjective encounter with Christ in the Church. Dorner cannot accept the idea that Christ's dynamic life is given in the Church. This romanist thinking would return us to the Middle Ages. It is a return to naive objectivism, unbalanced by the subjective principle of Protestantism. Nevin's objectivism leads in the direction of pantheism, by not distinguishing the object from the subject, such that the believer could declare, "I am Christ" and the Church is "Christ developed." However, if Nevin were to recognize faith as the condition of theology, he could likewise admit scientific distinctions in the factors that make faith possible, as well as various ways by which an individual might come to faith.

Dorner continues the same criticism with regard to Nevin's position on the Apostles' Creed. Removing the Creed's dependence on Scripture elevates it beyond its systematic place in Church Dogmatics under the category of Church Symbolics. He concludes by arguing that Nevin is wrong to believe that his position is historically sound.

Indeed, Nevin's unbalanced objectivity, in Dorner's view, brings

[893] Dorner, "Liturgical Conflict," p. 345. Dorner is apparently unaware of Nevin's articles on "Faith" carried in the Messenger (1840).

before us a transcendental object. No longer is Christ's life in the Church the recorded confessional writings of the centuries, but instead the unhistorical spiritual presence of Christ himself. This strays miles from Calvin's doctrine. "For where does he get his certainty of his idea of the Church, and where its proofs?"[894]

Dorner believes that Nevin's "objective Christology," which omits the role of faith in right knowledge, leads to his most serious omission. What role does Nevin give the Holy Spirit? Without question, Calvin emphasized the role of the Holy Spirit in regeneration. Any softening of the doctrine of regeneration leads to the diminishing of the effect of the Holy Spirit. Dorner contends that it is not the Church which confirms the effectiveness of the grace imparted in the sacraments, but the Holy Spirit existing in those who by faith believe.[895]

Finally, Dorner returns to the question of the liturgy. He concludes that Nevin's theological peculiarities have led him back to the sacrificial language which certainly is not Calvinistic.[896]

Theologically the essence of Dorner's criticism is that, in the tradition of Schleiermacher, he wants to retain the systematically critical character of Church Dogmatics. And while christology is the central thrust of Mercersburg and Dorner's systems, Dorner will not allow christology as the first experience of all religious knowledge.

Nevin's "Answer to Professor Dorner" came in 1868. Nevin began by

[894] Dorner, "Liturgical Conflict," p. 356.

[895] Dorner, "Liturgical Conflict," pp. 358-360.

[896] Dorner, "Liturgical Conflict," p. 362.

reminding his readers that Dorner is of Lutheran confession now a member of the Evangelical Church of Prussia and "no ultimate umpire" in the affairs of the German Reformed Church in America. Furthermore, Dorner, according to Nevin, has seriously distorted the GRC's liturgical controversy. Yet Dorner is right at one point. Mercersburg is more Anglican in its position on the importance of the "old Creeds." With Anglicans, Mercersburg confesses "belief" in the Holy Church.[897]

But then, asks Nevin, why must our christology match Dorner's at every point? And there are differences, beginning with the one elaborated by Dorner, that Nevin makes christocentrism the only standpoint from which Christianity, in its fullness, can be apprehended. Yet for Dorner, christological assertions are not apriori, but follow from knowledge of God upon which both christology and anthropology can build. Thus Dorner's initial criticism is that Nevin's system begins without the ontological groundwork for creation. Yet Nevin replies that he has never taught this. God, says Nevin, is the ontological first principle out of which all things have their being. Yet theism, as such, cannot bring an individual to right knowledge, or "faith," because it cannot necessarily bring an individual to Christ. Theism is likewise the first principle of a host of false religions. The distinctiveness of Christianity requires a first principle which alone constitutes the ground and absolute source of all true religious knowledge.[898]

This principle is the incarnation. It is from this first principle

[897] Nevin, "Answer," pp. 538-543. Also, p. 206 of this thesis.

[898] Nevin, "Answer," p. 553.

that we must take our stand by faith, rather than from the starting point of the knowledge of God. The fact of the incarnation, is comprehended in the Son's eternal generation from the Father, such that Christianity finds its principle in the concept of creation, as creation finds its first principle in the concept of God as First Cause of all things. From this relationship of principles, that of the new creation in Christianity stands as the guiding and foremost of its age, such that it provides understanding not only for our idea of the future, but how we understand the past. This is what Nevin claims that he meant when he said, this "proposition needs no proof." It is Christianity's "self-evident axiom."[899]

Dorner assumed that Nevin's "self-evident axiom" meant that an individual did not need to exercise faith in coming to true knowledge of God and that his extreme objectivity leaves no room for the subjective factor. But Dorner himself, Nevin argues, stresses the objective factor as much as he. Dorner conceives his "objectivity" from the historical fact of Jesus as God's "living word." Here, in Dorner's system as distinct from Nevin's, right knowledge remains dependent on a cleverly disguised transcendent object of Dorner's own creation. Here Christ's real presence is seen or conceptualized as God's "living Word." Yet Nevin believes that faith is even more crucial in his system. For Nevin Christ cannot be apprehended conceptually, in the theological and ultimately subjective abstraction of "living Word." Christ cannot be apprehended by mind at all, but only confessed by the Creed.[900]

[899] Nevin, "Answer," p. 554.

[900] Nevin, "Answer," pp. 568-571.

Nevin writes that such a confession, if it is authentic, must come from the real union of the believer with Christ. And as the Creed produces from this union the "immanent law of the Church," the Church must be "believed" regardless of the mystery of its existence. From the experience of this law the historical Christ is recognize in the Church as an ongoing personality in the world. From this perspective Christ's life embraces all aspects of his heavenly as well as his earthly life, including his atoning work. This question of the atonement became the most controversial theological issue between Dorner and Nevin.

Unlike Dorner, Nevin would not see the atonement as the first principle of Christianity. For him the atonement is a crucial aspect of the fact of the incarnation.[901] This controversy was continued by Nevin in his attack on Dorner in his 1868 review of Dorner's History of Protestant Theology. Dorner's christology reduces to his doctrine of the atonement in which faith in Christ is essentially belief that Christ's death paid the price of human sin. Nevin concludes that Dorner is guilty of shackling himself to the dominating interest of the sixteenth-century Reformers and the scholastic tendency they fostered. Nevin seeks to make clear Mercersburg's departure from this rationalistic tendency. Only in the sacramental Church is "God manifest in the flesh." Such a manifestation is only possible in an "Apostolic ministry by Divine consecration."[902]

Nevin expanded his criticism of Dorner's doctrine of the atonement in 1870 with an exegetical work on Hebrews 10:10 ("And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" RSV). Here Nevin seeks to divulge the heart of his own theology. Nevin

[901] Nevin, "Answer," pp. 600-637.

[902] Nevin, "Dorner: First," pp. 289-290.

concludes that both he and Dorner would likely understand the writer of the Hebrews to be saying that, "The whole Gospel centres in the death of Christ." It is at this center that the Christian finds salvation because it is here that the doctrine of the atonement conveys salvation from the curse of sin. The doctrine to be derived from the writer's statement that Christ's atoning sacrifice is "once for all," is not unproblematic. Two antithetical theories have emerged. One is the Protestant idea of atonement which maintains Christ's sacrifice as having a punctiliar character. Here the sense of the sacrifice is like the aorist in Greek. The action occurred having its place and effect in the action alone, as if the way to understand the Hebrews' passage is, "once and no more." The other idea is the Roman idea of re-sacrifice. Here the sacrifice is repeated time and time again. Nevin argues that the meaning of the Hebrews' "once and for all" is neither of these extremes. The Roman idea of re-sacrifice is irresponsible. But the position of Dorner's Protestantism leaves the Church with "a once which is done and left behind, and with which the world has to do now only in the way of memory or thought."[903]

Such a conclusion separates the living Christ from his atoning act. It pronounces the formal propitiatory power of that act without accounting for the material fact of that power. It replaces a dead Lord with an equally dead law, even if the law is the doctrine of reconciliation and renewed relationship with God. But how can a decree which reconciles be more than that, a decree - "You are henceforth justified"? No, Nevin responds:

> The sacrifice of Christ is once for all - never loses its force, never

[903] John W. Nevin, "Once for All," Mercersburg Review, 17 (1870), pp. 100-106.

> comes to an end - just because Christ Himself is once for all, and cannot come to an end or die. The atonement holds in the death of Christ, but only in this as swallowed up by the power of His victorious resurrection. It has no existence on the outside of His life, or as an event lying behind it in its present glorified form. It is part of His mediatorial being as it now stands.[904]

It is precisely Christ's "endless life" that makes the act of the atonement effective. Equally, it is the Protestant scholastic idea of the atonement as a mere historical fact having no continuing life that produces the lifeless, churchless, unliturgical, unsacramental forms which now proliferate. Such is the case with Dorner, and likewise the Episcopalians, with their pedantic arguments over ecclesiastical form. Neither is centered in the "living person of the Redeemer." To be centered in Christ means to experience mediatorial salvation in an actual "earthly state." This mediation, as offered in union with the Holy Spirit, assumed the person of Christ glorified, as an "earthly" and thus "objective" presence found exclusively in the Holy Catholic Church as we have it in the mystery pronounced by the Apostles' Creed. The atonement cannot be effective except as it emanates from the life of Christ meeting likewise the soul who appropriates that sacrifice at the "Christian altar." The sacrament then, is the action claiming the objective effect of the supernatural order on the natural order.[905]

WHERE SCHAFF AND NEVIN DIFFERED

Dorner forced Nevin to hone even more sharply the churchly implications of his christology. Nevin had already come to see the Apostles' Creed as the confession which crowns the incarnation in its

[904] Nevin, "Once," p. 106.

[905] Nevin, "Once," pp. 107-117.

response to the matter of faith as it exists in Jesus Christ. It was now a matter of identifying his confessional position directly with his christological starting point. Thus the Creed established the principles of Christian faith, even though the faith did exist prior to formal recognition of the Creed by the Church.

Schaff was not involved in the theological subtleties of Nevin's controversy with Dorner. He had long since left the seminary, as had Nevin, and taken up residency in New York. Yet he probably retained Schleiermacher's dogmatic place for the creeds and confessions and would have shared some of Dorner's concern at Nevin's removal of the place of Church Symbolics from its "proper" place in Schleiermacher's system. Still, he never openly disputed Nevin's theological representation of their system, nor did he endorse any criticism of Nevin. He had always stood with Nevin in defending against outside intrusion into the affairs of the seminary or the GRC.

One early source of information suggesting distance between Schaff and Nevin comes directly from Schaff's son, David. The latter seems to have believed that his father had been too closely identified with Nevin. Yet David never tells the reader where Nevin and his father differed, except in terms of personal disposition. However, he does argue that Mercersburg represented a "moderate churchly tendency." Given the importance of the Church question to both Schaff and Nevin, we must assume that David Schaff is expressing his father's later feeling that Nevin pressed the catholic spirit of the movement beyond where Schaff was willing to go. There is also reason to believe Nevin's pressing was more vigorous than Schaff's. Much of the later forgiveness of Schaff by the denominational opponents of Mercersburg came from their simple recognition that Schaff was less

disagreeable and less forceful than Nevin.[906]

Theodore Trost is more specific than David Schaff in identifying the differences between the two colleagues. He argues that they disagree on christology. Trost writes that Nevin was more radically christocentric than Schaff. But again, there is nothing in Trost's work to demonstrate that fact. It may be true, but like David Schaff, Trost states merely that in Nevin's christology he went "far beyond" anything Schaff wrote or said. With David Schaff, Trost identifies Nevin as the controversialist in the Mercersburg Movement.[907]

George Schriver also sought to establish the distinction between Nevin and Schaff. Yet his assessment amounts to little more than another criticism of Nevin's existence in terms of criticism, and approval of Schaff's more irenical position.[908]

Nichols is more specific and practical in his identification of a real difference between the two. Nichols says that Schaff, unlike Nevin, had no criticism of the Methodists, primarily because they had not split with the church, but worked within it. While Nichols attributes Schaff's congeniality to his conservative Prussian monarchist views, My argument clearly reflects Schaff's early experience in America. As Schaff came to join Nevin in believing that American Puritan practice had become the dominant influence on American Protestantism in general, Mercersburg harmonized in its criticism of the sectarian principle prolife rating there, whether this principle was found in Lutherans, Reformed or Methodists.[909]

[906] David Schaff, Life, p. 121.

[907] Trost, "Philip Schaff's Concept," pp. 116-117.

[908] Schriver, "Schaff's Concept," pp. 148-200.

[909] Nichols, Romanticism, p. 128.

The earliest Presbyterian description of the disunity of Schaff and Nevin comes from Charles Hodge. But here again, nothing solid emerges as to where Schaff distanced himself from Nevin. Hodge wrote that he believed Schaff to be more "conservative" than Nevin. Yet he adds that it appeared that Schaff had abandoned his own position (whatever that may have been) and taken Nevin's side against Princeton.[910] Schaff, however, never corroborates this claim, nor Princeton's later claim that he differs from Nevin in his loyalty to the principle of justification by faith and the authority of the Scriptures.[911] Since Nevin had never denied either of these Protestant principles, it is doubtful that they represent a point of dispute between the colleagues at Mercersburg. Still there may be weight in Hodge's judgment that Schaff was more "conservative" than Nevin. Most likely it reflects the non-combative nature or disposition of Schaff and not anything Schaff wrote or said. There is no early evidence that Schaff withheld his endorsement of the Mercersburg system, as articulated theologically by Nevin and historically by himself. That their respective work was received and interpreted in different ways hardly amounts to an argument for fundamental disagreement.

Again, the idealistically informed catholic and evangelical program initiated in America by Nevin and Schaff was a united front developed in order to address critically the growth of unacceptable Protestant religious principles. These principles were increasingly being informed by common sense realistic ideas and spread through Old School support of inductive science and theology, New Measures revivalism and Puritan religion in general. Mercersburg had as its greater end the promotion of idealistic

[910] Hodge, rev. of "Antichrist," p. 631.

[911] Hodge, "Dr. Schaff," p. 154.

Germanic culture through philosophy, science, history and theology. Yet the practical concern of both Nevin and Schaff was the Church, and more specifically the German Reformed Church. In 1853 Schaff wrote on the Church question and the controversy surrounding Nevin and himself. (This was a year after the "Cyprian" articles, but well before the Dorner controversy.) Here Schaff reiterates his support of Nevin and their shared concern that the source of the Church's life is supernatural.[912]

Yet by the time of the liturgical controversy and the debate with Dorner (1868), Nevin had broken with the German mediating theology's dogmatic outline by identifying symbolics directly with christology. In a sense he had elevated the confession of the mystery of union above its rational explanation and identified the confession with faith itself. Surely Schaff would not have balked at any piety which placed such emphasis on inner faith over scientific objectivity. Yet in terms of the systematic treatment of the contents of the Christian faith, Schaff would see the supernatural and primary place of Christ and his restoration of the communion between God and creation as a matter of the historical record of the Church's response to Christ's historic life and work.

Schaff would not endorse Nevin's reversal of this formula. And he certainly remained "softer" than his friend on the importance of the creeds and confessions. Yet he stood firm with Nevin in criticising the old orthodox Calvinist position which began with the knowledge of God. Both Schaff and Nevin began with Christ. And both moved from Christ to faith. Likewise for both, faith remained connected with a right understanding of Christ. The incarnation provided that understanding by recognizing Christ

[912] Schaff, "German Theology, p. 144.

as the source of humanity's reunion with God. But here Nevin detected in German theology the Protestant rationalism which was at the heart of Protestantism's runaway subjectivism. The idea of reunion with God is not a-priori nor fundamental. The mediating idea is lodged in the subjective German pietistic experience and romantic desire to be united with the Absolute. Schaff, along with most other mediating theologians, found this principle to be the historical source of the confession. Nevin, on the other hand, found the confession to be the ancient source of the modern German concept of reconciliation. The Apostles' Creed was the most simple and straightforward manifestation of the greater confession which is obedience to and life in Christ. This is what Nevin meant when he said his theology was more Anglican than German at this point.

Schaff appears not to have commented on these matters. And it is not impossible that, since such matters were not immediately in his province, he himself continued to wrestle with what must have been an intriguing problem for him. Yet Schaff's public position seems to suggest that he retained Schleiermacher's theological outline which kept Church Symbolics in its place as the historical (and human) record of the Church's living faith. Again, Nevin himself would not have rejected this. But his fear was that the German system placed such emphasis on the concept of reconciliation, that it failed to see the concept as itself simply a matter of the recent historical record of the Church, one which obviously sublimates the Protestant principle of individual salvation. Elevating the Creed and identifying it with faith (almost to the degree that faith is the Creed) addressed that fear.

The controversial implications of Nevin's elevation of the Creed was the apparent diminishing of the importance of the Scriptures. This Schaff

could not abide. Years after the two had separated and Schaff had taken a position at Union Theological Seminary, he wrote of the creeds describing them as "human compositions." The right knowledge which kindles faith in the person of Christ begins with Scripture. The creeds and confessions which follow are only as good as their agreement with Scripture.[913]

Princeton apparently came to forgive Schaff his association with Nevin. As early as 1863 we find the Princeton Review including articles by Schaff. Yet his work here remained historical and non-polemical. Nor did he ever mention any of the controversies of the past.[914]

AFTER THE CIVIL WAR

The real source of Nevin and Schaff's eventual separation was more circumstantial than theological. The bitter liturgical controversy which began in 1861 left both men dispirited. In 1862 the Mercersburg area was being raided by Confederate troops, and the seminary closed in 1863. Schaff went to teach at Andover and finally took up residence in New York. Nevin became less active in the denomination and eventually became an administrator as president of Franklin and Marshall College. Without these two men, the movement faded from the center of denominational interest.

Liberal religion was rapidly becoming the strongest force in American religion. Much of its influence was carried in the enormous growth of Universalism during the middle part of the nineteenth century. And while the Civil War seemed to mark the end of Unitarian expansion, the moderate, orthodox evangelical doctrines and confessional base of American religion

[913] Schaff, "Creeds," p. 7.

[914] Philip Schaff, "Anglo-American Sabbath," Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review, 35 (1863), pp. 537-571. Other articles by Schaff appeared in 1864 (three articles), 1865 (one), 1866 (two) and 1867 (one).

had all but vanished. Revivals continued, but came to be seen as part of America's religious culture, and not aberrations of that culture.

This left room for the real victory of secular philosophy which, though much embattled today, still dominates American intellectual culture. The issue of evolution and social progress captured the interest of the Civil War survivors. Inductive theology and biblical criticism fitted well with the growing concern for scientific objectivity even in fields relating to culture, society and religion. Objective historical study effectively challenged Schaff's method of church historiography. The inductive principles of common sense realism, as it would itself evolve into American pragmatism, inspired the practical efforts of the promoters of "social gospel." The Church question, with its emphasis on sacraments, ministry and christology, faded from interest.

Although Schaff continued the ecumenical struggle, the principle of real union as that of the Creed was never envisioned by the American denominations. With the triumph of ultramontanism in the Syllabus of Errors and the decree of papal infallibility in 1870, virtually all Protestant ecumenical hopes of reconciliation with Rome disappeared.

As Nichols[8] has written, in view of the opposite direction of American religion in the second part of the nineteenth century, it is difficult to assess Mercersburg's influence on the next generation. However, E. Brooks Holifield has recently reemphasized the importance of Mercersburg's influence on Southern theology.

Holifield mentions John Adger who taught in 1857 at South Carolina's Columbia Seminary. His lectures focused on Calvin's Institutes of the Christian Religion. Adger followed the debate between Hodge and Nevin and

supported Nevin's position.[915]

Holifield has also reemphasized the influence of Mercersburg on W.P. DuBose, the Episcopal Church's leading nineteenth-century scholar. In addition, we find the Mercersburg school having given guidance to Krauth and the high-church Lutheran movement, and to the thought of many Episcopalians through the work of Muhlenberg. Finally, the lasting influence of Mercersburg exists in the United Church of Christ through the efforts of pastors, theologians and church members who are still nurtured by the Mercersburg liturgy and theology. But again, no movement incorporating Mercersburg's philosophical principles or its catholic and evangelical theology carried forward its dream of a system which could inspire Christendom. Indeed, it would appear that Mercersburg aided the rise of liberal theology by helping to end the philosophical and theological influence of New England Calvinism. Like modern theology, Mercersburg helped to shift theology's starting-point from that of the knowledge of God to anthropology.

Perhaps Mercersburg's influence is more phoenix-like. Recent questions regarding the Church, questions of ecumenicity, the sacraments, faith and order, etc., have raised Mercersburg to renewed prominence among Reformed people. Recently a Society has been established to study Mercersburg and carry forward its tradition. Books and dissertations are appearing which not only consider but develop Mercersburg's ideals. And the Mercersburg Review has been revived. Still, it remains to be seen what impact this new interest in Mercersburg will have on the next century.

[915] E. Brooks Holifield, "Mercersburg, Princeton, and the South: The Sacramental Controversy in the Nineteenth Century,"" Journal of Presbyterian History, 54 (1976), p. 240

CONCLUSION

We have described the Mercersburg Movement during the years 1840 through 1860 in terms of a clash between warring philosophical and theological discourses, constructing the discourse from the books, journals, letters and sermons through which the two central figures of the movement carried on the debate. In so doing we proposed ways in which Mercersburg and its antagonists might fit in the description of nineteenth-century American religion. Secondly, we offered some insight into the competition between religious ideals by broadening the analysis of the development of ideas to include a full reading of the discourse which such competition includes. The Mercersburg Movement is an especially keen example of religious conflict in America. When Princeton chose to play the antagonists we have the best of American theological science resisting the intrusion of the fledgling American transplant of German mediating thought. In addition we have shown what exactly was at stake: not only power, influence and prestige, but a sincere belief that opposing views might damage the progress of the kingdom of God in America.

We have taken pains to describe the clash in terms, symbols and metaphors drawn directly from the discourse itself. We have tried to show that each position, including that of the revivalists, sought to develop their position in terms of a comprehensive theology, and, if they could, a system. The system functioned as fortification for the ideas and practices which each party sought to preserve and promulgate.

Furthermore we have shown how philosophical ideas and systems were

adapted to inform the movements themselves. At times loose associations were formed (such as that between Berg and Hodge) based not only on the shared objective of defeating the opposing position, but on common points of philosophy or doctrine or political feeling. We have included examples of scholars who although engaged primarily in the investigation of ideas, found that popular support and public opinion influenced the development of their thought. We have also seen how religious leaders used public feeling to defeat their theological opponents.

American Protestants adopted common sense realism, finding that it cooperated nicely with the inductive science of experimentation. The spirit of "proofs" seemed to lend support to orthodoxy's fading star. But we submit that adapting a philosophical or theological perspective is not simply a matter of choice. The interplay between philosophic language and theological practice, and even ways of speaking about experience, excludes other systems of description of the same kind. Competition is not voluntary and may erupt even when two different theological vocabularies share the same goal (as, for example, Princeton and Mercersburg seeking to limit the influence of revivals). In addition the natural confusion caused by a new perspective leads to misunderstanding.

In the clash between American common sense realism and the German mediating approach used by Mercersburg we have sought to demonstrate that it was not simply a clash of ideas which existed independently of the cultural context. Indeed a description of ideas abstracted from the discourse may provide a narrative of American intellectual life, but it cannot represent the true complexity of issues and concerns which simultaneously shaped and were shaped by the ideas. The discursive dialectic we present is an attempt to allow the discourse to speak its own

experience and thereby offer a richer insight into the development of American religious history.

Finally, the method we employ provides another test of conclusions drawn by scholars about the Mercersburg school. We conclude with a summary of our observations concerning the movement.

Common sense realism did prevail over romantic idealism in nineteenth-century America. But the one was not the common sense realism of Scotland, nor the other the romantic idealism of Germany. Americans had modified the European contributions to Christian orthodoxy. Nineteenth-century America had developed an attitude towards science and technological progress which pulled her cultural institutions along. In religion, Hodge is just one of many examples of influential leaders who celebrated the conviviality of scientific progress and empirical method. Bacon, Stewart and Reid were heroes. But it was the principles they inculcated that made them so. Experimentation and sense certainty were adapted to the situation. Inductive science was not at war with revealed faith because evangelicals were committed to limiting experimental science to the analysis of natural phenomena. Hodge and other Old School Presbyterians found this to be in harmony with their more traditional ideas of philosophical dualism.

Likewise, German monism as it exists in identity philosophy was adapted by Mercersburg to the American situation. Even the German Rauch modified his position simply through translating his idealism into English. Add to this the desire to speak to American experience, to create a new philosophical perspective and to promote the issues important to the GRC, and we discover that Mercersburg was only as "romantic" as Princeton was "realistic."

In one sense the clash can be characterized as a clash of metaphors.

The dominant mechanistic metaphor of sense experience clashed with the organic metaphor of natural development. But the usefulness of metaphors depends on a shared linguistic experience. Conflict arose in Mercersburg's attempt to change the linguistic experience of American common sense realists. They shrewdly detected a growing materialism in American culture. Curbing materialism without choking progress became their ambition. They believed that the organic metaphor provided the means to this. It was a middle path parallel yet distinct from that which was popular in Germany. It was a mediating position which was thoroughly American.

Materialism was fueled by both theoretical and practical problems. Theoretically Scottish Realism was perceived to give dominance to the importance of understanding nature. Evangelicals supported this because it seemed to leave revelation alone and in the safe hands of orthodox leaders. The world could be described in practical terms by physical scientists; the Bible could be described in equally practical terms by "spiritual" scientists. The practical implication was the cultural balance of social progress and solid fundamental religion.

Mercersburg saw a danger in this. If the theoretical claims of Scottish Realism were taken to their conclusion, scientific knowledge of God is impossible. Search as they might, physiologists and psychologists will never discover an organ for knowing what is beyond the senses. Furthermore, exuberance for the practical benefits of physical science made the inductive method paramount. Mercersburg saw this as leading to emphasizing physical phenomena over spiritual such that skepticism would develop in questions about the reliability of claims about the spiritual world.

The metaphor of organic law sought to link physical and spiritual

experience through the organ of faith.

For Mercersburg the need was for a theology which made the organ of faith more than mere dogma. That theology was the recovery of the historical Christ. The human Jesus became the organic link between revelation and the natural world.

The supporters of Scottish Realism found this incredible. Their commitment was to a strict dualism. Unity with the world of revelation was certainly expressed as unity with Christ; but it was a spiritual Christ whose "life" was mediated through an invisible Spirit. The connection between revelation and the physical world was not itself physical. It occurred in the individual's recognition of the content of revelation.

The strict dualism and the effective materialism of the Scottish realists forced Mercersburg to argue that supernaturalism is as much a reality as naturalism, and that experience of the invisible world of spirit is as much a part of common experience as experience of the visible world.

Such an argument made Mercersburg appear "superstitious" in the sense accorded Roman Catholicism. Mercersburg threatened to return America to the dark ages. They sought to reverse the great strides made by science. But for Mercersburg, underlying all natural laws were invisible laws which could not be verified by sense experience. Here was the "proof" of the possibility of revelation in human experience. It was also the very condition upon which a science of religion could be based.

If this was all there was to the debate it would have been fascinating to see how these two positions might come to terms. After all they shared so much of what they both hoped for: vital religion; a Christ-centered faith; a reasonable and well articulated theology; an emphasis on the Word of God, with the Bible as their only rule. But once the accusation of

superstition and ritualism were associated with Mercersburg's catholic principles (a direct result of their Continental thinking) they were identified as Roman sympathizers. This stigma seriously impeded the dialogue on the issue of the individual's experience of the divine, and turned what might have been a fruitful discussion of the doctrine of the Incarnation and its implications for ecclesiology into a series of controversies over who was and who was not heretical.

Defensive from almost the beginning, Mercersburg spent enormous energy in stating and restating their orthodoxy. Accused of error and heresies on all fronts, they resorted to their superior knowledge of history and Reformed theology to defend themselves against what they came to perceive as a unified and demonic conspiracy of the system of sects. They tended to cast virtually all opponents into the mode of "rationalists" and "Puritans." And while they were encouraged in the idea by the writers of the Puritan Recorder, who claimed to speak for all the faithful in New England and those in America who still clung to the "old faith," the diversity of American religious culture in the nineteenth century made such conclusions reductionistic.

To a great extent the strength of Mercersburg's argument depended on their skill in historical description. Yet they could not shake the stigma of Roman influence. Indeed, to some extent they encouraged it. They truly believed that Rome was not a threat to Protestantism. The threat was initially rationalism. But as rationalism manifested itself in the American denominational system of sects, it was Puritan religious practice that was thought to threaten American Protestant religion.

Mercersburg's softness on Rome and the suspicion of wholesale defection from the "old" Reformed faith ruined any chance of focusing the

issue on the question of the Church and the way God works in His creation. Only recently has the "Church Question" re-emerged, now that Protestant hysteria and fear of Rome is significantly diminished. Now it seems the issue of the reunion of the Church can be discussed with both parties more secure in their own positions yet concerned enough about the problem of disunity to make progress possible. Yet even today Mercersburg would qualify the success of any orthodox attempts at unity according to two principles. First, agreement on the centrality of the Apostles' Creed. Second, a conscious purging of the spirit of sectarian disunity. Indeed, Mercersburg would see the second as possible only after the Apostles' Creed becomes the very source of the ecumenical drive.

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