

# THE LITURGICAL CONFLICT

IN THE

REFORMED CHURCH OF NORTH AMERICA,

WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO FUNDAMENTAL EVANGELICAL DOCTRINES.\*

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[To give weight and currency to their peculiar theology, Dr. Nevin and his party have at different times appealed to distinguished theologians as holding similar views. Such appeals have had considerable influence. Those of us who have opposed the strange and offensive doctrines as at variance with the Scriptures and contrary to the faith of the Reformed Church, have been denounced in no tender terms as stupid and wicked agitators, who were without cause disturbing the peace of the Church, who were too ignorant to understand the subjects under discussion, who were falsely accusing good men and true, learned men and faithful, and who had the evangelical theologians of the fatherland against them. Now, however, the tables are completely turned. The distinguished and learned *Dr. Dorner*, author of several masterly works in defence of the evangelical Reformed faith, and one of the most eminent theological professors in Germany, having learned that Dr. Nevin was making unfair use of his name in favor of the new theology, has come out openly against Dr. N. and his school. Dr. Dorner stands by the apostolic faith of the Reformed Church. He is unwilling that his name and influence should be used to support and further such pernicious errors as Dr. N. holds and teaches. He sees and exposes the false and dangerous character of Mercersburg theology, and is determined that such a system shall not get comfort from him. The following able and overwhelming article, by Dr. Dorner, gives the result of his examination of Dr. Nevin. And whilst it will be found gentle for the most part in terms (*suaviter in modo*), it will also be found scathing in fact (for-

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\* Sources of information: (Dr. Nevin) "The Liturgical Question, with reference to the Provisional Liturgy of the German Reformed Church. A report by the Liturgical Committee." Philad. 1862.

titer in re.) We commend it to the earnest perusal of our readers. It has been thought best to give it entire in one number of the Monthly. To do this the present issue has been extended to 56 pages, thus taking eight pages from the September number. In the full conviction that we have not been bringing vain or unjust accusations against Dr. N. and his school, it will not be wondered at that it is specially gratifying to us to be able to lay this able article before the Church. None can more deeply deplore than we do the sad defection of Dr. Nevin and the Mercersburg School, from the faith of our Church. But as that faith is incomparably dearer to us than the favor or friendship of men, we must expose and denounce all assaults upon it and all attempts to undermine it; and may well be justified in any joy we feel at being so ably and warmly endorsed and encouraged in our endeavors to resist the revolution in doctrine and worship which has been started, and which is so persistently pressed by Dr. Nevin and his party.—A few explanatory or supplementary notes have been added, which will easily be distinguished as our own by the signature attached. Only let ministerial brethren and the Church at large, heed the kind warning voice which thus comes from one so nobly concerned for the maintenance of the old and tried apostolic faith against the insidious assaults of ever reviving error.—Dr. Nevin has recently struggled to break the force of Dr. Dorner's faithful testimony by declaring him disqualified by his entanglement in the peculiar relations of the Prussian Church to the State, for rightly judging the merits of our controversy. This is a miserable subterfuge; the cry of despair. Dorner's mind, as may be easily seen from the following article, is not beclouded with the mists of such false relations; his theology is not entangled as Rothe's was, in the meshes of Erastianism. He moves, in thought and feeling, in the clear quick atmosphere of heavenly evangelical truth, and utters no uncertain sounds. Dorner is Nevin's master in theology, and incomparably more than that in his clear apprehension of the divine foundation of eternal truth, and in his ardent devotion to its holy cause.—B.]

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"An Order of Worship for the Reformed Church." 1867.

"The Revised Liturgy. A history and criticism of the Ritualistic movement in the German Reformed Church," by J. H. A. BOMBERGER, D.D., Philad. 1867.

Vindication of the Revised Liturgy, historical and theological, by the Rev. J. W. NEVIN, D.D. Philadelphia. 1867.

Reformed, not Ritualistic. A reply to Dr. Nevin's "Vindication," etc. By J. H. A. BOMBERGER, D.D. Philad. 1867.

A Treatise on Mercersburg Theology, or Mercersburg and Modern Theology compared. By SAM. MILLER. Philad. 1866.

The Minutes of the General Synod of Dayton in the Reformed Church Messenger, from the termination of the year 1866 to the beginning of 1867; furthermore from Sept. 4, 1867.

Christological Theology, by H. Harbaugh, D.D., (Inaugural Address, 1864.)

Der Reform. Waechter. Cleveland. 1867-4. The High-Church Movement, by Ruetenik. p. 183-208.

Mercersburg Review, an organ for Christological, Historical and Positive Theology. Edited by Harbaugh, D.D. Vol. XIV. 1867. With articles by Nevin, Harbaugh, Apple, Gerhart, Schaff and others.

The German Reformed Church of North America formed originally in large part by emigrants from Western Germany and German Switzerland, and which has spread over many States of the great Republic, especially Pennsylvania, New York, Virginia, Ohio, is at present involved in a crisis which claims our earnest attention. The parties there in controversy with each other, are more or less fully aware of the significance of their positions in regard to principles; hence, also, substantially, in regard to doctrines. This is evident from the fact, among other things, that they seek to attract to their controversy the attention of evangelical Christians in Europe. Beside the interest felt by me in a promising branch of the German Evangelical Church, I find special occasion for taking some part in this controversy. Members of the German Reformed Church of North America have earnestly desired me to express my views upon the questions at issue, since Dr. Nevin, the leader of one side, publicly appealed to my work on Christology as a testimony of modern German theology in favor of his tendency, in a speech at the Synod of Dayton, 1866, reported in the German Reformed Messenger of January 2, 1867; and has otherwise drawn my name into the controversy.\*

We must start out with a brief historical sketch. The German Reformed Church in America used the *Palatinate Liturgy* in connection with the Palatinate, or Heidelberg Catechism. But the influences to which the Church was exposed in the new world, led almost to a disuse of that Liturgy. Free prayer became more prominent, and through Methodist influences, the old order of worship and liturgy were everywhere† infringed upon. As early as 1842, Nevin, then in Mercersburg, found it necessary to write a tract against Methodist revivalism, "The Anxious Bench," and against the accompanying innovations. His views met with approval. The good of Methodist measures was not denied, but many fanatical abuses were found associated with them which were foreign to a churchly character. In 1840, Dr. Mayer had, by request of Synod, prepared and published a Lit-

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\* My opinion of the controversy, expressed orally to some persons from America in answer to their inquiry, was published without my knowledge or desire (in Dr. Bomberger's Tract "Reformed, not Ritualistic,") and has been referred to in American papers; so that I feel called upon by more than one consideration to give a fuller statement of my views.

[† This is slightly incorrect. Large sections of the Church were not invaded by the Methodist innovations.—B.]

urgy, which, however, departed too far from the pattern of the old Reformed Liturgy, and got into but limited use.\* Nevin's tract, which presented the superiority of older works over the innovations, awakened historical inquiry, and the self-consciousness of the German Reformed Church† which now sought more energetically to labor in the spirit of her peculiar life. The Theological school at Mercersburg, with Nevin and Schaff at its head, strengthened this churchly tendency in opposition to the subjectivism and arbitrariness of the sects, and gave it a theological, both historical and dogmatical, foundation. Efforts were also made to secure greater unity in worship on the basis of the original principles and usages of the Reformed Church. The Synod of 1848, appointed a committee to report upon this subject to the next Synod (Norristown, 1849.) The report then presented urged the claims of the forms peculiar to the Reformed Church, at least the older ones, against antiliturgical views, and plead for such liturgical forms as were recognized by the fathers of the Church. The old Palatinate liturgy was to be the model; indeed the presumption seemed to prevail that it should be retained, for the most part, in the contemplated revision.

At Norristown (1849) a liturgical committee was appointed consisting of twelve members, including Nevin, Schaff, Bomberger, Wolff, Berg. It would lead us too far to detail the history of this liturgical movement, the labors and the different positions taken by the committee in the work, and, finally, the relation of successive Synods during the last seventeen years, to all that was done. It would be difficult, also, to do this, as the antagonistic parties apprehend and exhibit this history very diversely. The following chief facts may be taken as fixed:

The committee, at first of one mind, found its work more arduous than was supposed. The Mercersburg men, who enjoyed a well-earned authority, and held a leading position, notified the next Synods that they knew of no better way of doing the work than to furnish a simple translation of the Palatinate Liturgy. In view of the general state of the Church at the time, they thought it unnecessary to proceed with the labor of remodelling the old Liturgy, though they by no means thought it the best for the end contemplated, or suited to satisfy the

[\* This, also, needs qualification. The Mayer Liturgy was more generally used for some years than the New Order is as yet.—B.]

[† This awakening had begun before Dr. Nevin entered the Church.—B.]

weighty interests involved. There were, however, other vital Church questions which needed first to be settled before full and conclusive attention could be given to the liturgical question.

In what these last consisted does not appear. But it is not probable that at least a majority of the committee had a conviction that the old Reformed Liturgy would not admit, in tone and spirit, of such a modification as, according to *their* views of a good Liturgy, would answer to the true wants of the times; whilst the ruling spirit of the Church was not ripe or prepared for a Liturgy so newly constructed as to satisfy the committee. In this we find an admission, though unconsciously entertained, that what was aimed at was not simply a development or simple improvement of the Liturgy hitherto in use, but something at variance with both the past and present life of the Reformed Church. The committee so far acted openly and honestly in recommending first of all only a new translation of the old Palatinate Liturgy.\* But as by this proposition they assigned new churchly significance and further authority to that Liturgy, they likewise betrayed some uncertainty as to the correctness of *their* ultimate designs, which were yet directed against the maintenance of the old Palatinate Liturgy. They showed that they were as yet by no means committed to Romanizing ideals, or wholly alienated from old Reformed principles. Nevertheless, by the course pursued, the antagonism of the leaders to the old Palatinate Liturgy, was kept in the shade. The opponents of further innovations could, consistently, approve of the proposition in spite of its motive, which did not yet clearly reveal the antagonism, and of which in its whole breadth and import the leaders may themselves not have yet been conscious. The Synod, however, declared that it could not see why the present time should be less favorable than any later period for accomplishing the work. No doubt it thought that the Liturgy should harmonize with the present spirit and wants of the Church, and not that another spirit must first be planted in the Church, which should agree with the kind of Liturgy contemplated by the leaders.

The instructions of the committee were reiterated, but it did not pursue the work. On the contrary, Dr. Nevin resigned the chairmanship of it and Dr. Schaff took his place—though Dr. N. did not

[\* It must be remembered, however, that during all this time the work of modeling the theology of the Reformed Church after the pattern of the theory involved in that other kind of liturgy, was going on at Mercersburg.—B.]

withdraw from the committee. From the summer of 1852, the committee, especially Nevin, were engaged in studying liturgical literature of ancient and modern times, before and after the Reformation, and found it impossible to proceed rapidly with the work on account of the difficulty in making selections. In the next report of the committee, the Church is said to be in a transition process, so that delay seemed desirable. Yet a plan was submitted (Baltimore, 1852) in accordance with the results of the committee's liturgical studies, and setting forth principles for the construction of a new Liturgy, with some exemplifications. It stated openly that, according to their views, the general basis of the work should be the liturgical worship of the ancient Church, to the fourth century, and not only the pattern of the Reformation and subsequent periods. At the same time special reference should be had to the old Palitinate and other Reformed Liturgies of the sixteenth century. And the hope was expressed that a well prepared Liturgy, in accordance with these principles, would prove a bond of union between the ancient Catholic Church and the Reformation, and yet be a true product of the religious spirit of the present age.

The Synod consented to this change of plan, and after filling vacancies in the committee and enlarging it, directed the publication of a Liturgy for examination and trial by the Church. First in 1855 had the work so far progressed that its speedy issue could be promised. At the same time the committee, impressed with the responsibility of its work, warned against final decisions, especially as in other Protestant Churches, also, the liturgical question, which so deeply affected the interests of the Church, was being earnestly agitated. The committee desired only to present a preliminary Liturgy for trial and choice so that the Church might be fully prepared, by practical experience, to give it the most suitable and durable form.

In 1857, a "Provisional Liturgy" was submitted to the Synod at Allentown. The members of the committee united in this reference (although on various grounds they were not satisfied with a large portion of the work.) The Synod gave no sanction to it, but allowed its provisional use. A German translation was also undertaken for the use of the German portion of the Church. Even Dr. Bomberger, the subsequent opponent, so far approved of it as a whole, that he publicly commended the work. But as the committee had not given a final form to the work, it met with little favor among the congregations. Not only were the formulas partly too long and difficult for use; but there were in the Provisional Liturgy two entirely different systems of wor-

ship. One set of forms were suited to the pulpit, of a simple kind, in old Reformed style; the others, much less numerous, were an altar Liturgy with responses, and bore what has recently been called a ritualistic character. This not only caused offence in many congregations, but even the object of the Liturgy to effect greater uniformity in worship, must be frustrated by a book which allowed a choice between formulas framed according to such diverse liturgical systems. And as the majority of the committee, also, were themselves not satisfied with their work, but wished one cast in *one* mould, the desire arose after a few years to have a revision, which was then resolved upon by the Synod of Easton (1861) and referred to the same committee.\* The following instructions were given: "The committee shall consider the suggestions of the Classes as given in the minutes of their late meetings, and use them in the revision of the work as far as the general unity of the work will allow, and in a way that shall not be inconsistent with established liturgical principles and usages, or with the devotional or doctrinal genius of the German Reformed Church." In what those "liturgical principles" consisted was indeed not said. It looks, however, as though the Synod desired thereby to lean more definitely to the Reformed standpoint, and to regard her traditions. But the majority of the committee, as had been plainly enough indicated, understood "established liturgical principles" so that conformity with the Liturgies of the first century was taken as the necessary all-ruling basis. Next to this some "regard" might be paid to old Reformed usages, but only as a limitation, so far as the genius of the German Reformed Church might not be contradicted, whilst the positive, formative principle of the work lay in early Christian patterns. And the committee might have felt itself at greater liberty in this course had the present German Reformed Church meanwhile shown itself favorable to a more "ritualistic" forms of worship, especially as efforts were made to accustom the congregations to such ritualistic forms and train them to their use.

It appears that Dr. Schaff had, before the Synod of Easton, yielded the chairmanship of the committee to Dr. Nevin. But after the

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[\* The "Revision" was mainly brought about by those who found that the friends of the innovation were using the ritualistic portions of the Prov. Lit. to further their wishes, and who, though opposed to those ritualistic peculiarities, had unwittingly helped to give them some currency in the Church.—B.]

adoption of the resolution of that Synod, cited above, he asked himself, as it became a manly Christian character, whether he should not wholly retire. That resolution, taken in the sense in which the Synod had adopted it, could not allow of casting a work from *one* principle and mould in harmony with his views. He therefore offered his resignation as a member of the committee, and convinced that the Church was not yet ripe for such a Liturgy as he contemplated, desired that the work might be indefinitely postponed. He had no heart for the undertaking, and begged to be excused from the committee. But the Synod declined his resignation.

When the committee next met an irreconcilable dispute arose regarding the principles of revision, as Dr. Bomberger decidedly opposed the views of Dr. Nevin, and sought above all to defend Reformed traditions. The committee at length agreed to submit the two liturgical systems to the decision of the next Synod (Chambersburg, 1862.)

Dr. Nevin set forth his liturgical views more definitely in a tract entitled, "The Liturgical Question," etc., which was submitted as a report of the committee (properly only of the majority) to the Synod of Chambersburg, and argued in their favor against "the meagre conception" of his opponents, appealing to the secret longing of the congregations after the idea of worship in its ancient form, which he now more decidedly arrayed against Reformed principles. The time for pulpit handbooks was said to be past, and the old Palitinate would as little satisfy the present age as a Swiss Liturgy of the sixteenth century. If we were not ready to make the requisite advance, it would be better to allow hitherto admitted freedom in the matter. As Dr. N. himself acknowledges, (p. 63,) the Synod of Easton (1861) only desired a modification of the Provisional Liturgy, and that in a manner opposed to "ritualism;" but he concludes that there is no middle territory between the unsatisfactory forms of the sixteenth century and those of ancient times. For Dr. Nevin, the essential and characteristic features of the "Provisional Liturgy," were "its churchly, sacramental, and in a proper measure, priestly character," (whilst on the other hand Dr. Bomberger regarded its ritualistic features as secondary matters, which could easily be separated from the body of the work—a separation which the Synod appeared to favor;) hence he believed that as the Synod had not spoken against his principles, the revision might now go forward in *his own* frankly avowed sense, especially as the Synod had well nigh held him to the work against his will.

The matter now seemed to be somewhat unfavorable for the majority

of the committee. The minority found in Dr. Nevin's tract a violent sweeping assault upon free prayer, contemptuous treatment of the old Palatinate Liturgy, panegyric praise of ritualistic forms; and Dr. Bomberger prepared a minority report, with specimen suggestions for the modification of the Provisional Liturgy. (See "The Revised Liturgy," etc., by Bomberger, p. 59.) Both reports were discussed; the Synod adopted neither, and postponed further action, allowing freedom to use the Provisional Liturgy or not until ten years from its first issue had elapsed. ("Rev. Lit.," etc., by Bomberger, p. 61, etc.)

In 1863, however, the triennial *General Synod* met for the first time in Pittsburg, Pa., to which the Western (Ohio, etc.,) Synod presented requests for the immediate modification of the Prov. Lit., and the relinquishment of its use—the Western Synod being dissatisfied with it.\* The General Synod permitted the Western to prepare a Liturgy better suited to its wants; at the same time it directed the Eastern Synod to revise its Liturgy according to its own views, and to bring the revision to a final and definite conclusion. The latter appointed (Lancaster, 1864,) the old committee for this purpose, with instructions to complete the work so as to submit it for examination and approval to the next General Synod. In this committee, which immediately set to work, there was but *one* [active] member on the side of the minority, viz., Dr. Bomberger.

Dr. Bomberger was by no means opposed to a Liturgy, not even to the oral repetition of the Lord's Prayer and the Apostles' Creed, if the congregation desired it, or their loud amen at the close of the prayer; neither to the public confession of sin and declaration of pardon (to the penitent believer;) he merely opposed the altar-service (in Dr. Nevin's sense, B.,) multiplied responses, and certain doubtful doctrinal tendencies in the Lord's Supper, (rather both sacraments, B.,) service. On the other hand the majority of the committee, which no longer considered itself bound by the earlier rules of Synod, pursued their work in full accordance with their own liturgical views, without restraint, and without regard for the Western portion of the Church. They submitted the forms for Sunday and for the Lord's Supper, as specimens, to the Synod of Lewisburg, in 1855, and finally laid the whole work before the Synod of York, 1866, under the [table.] "An Order of Worship for the Reformed Church." The work was very

[\* In this matter the delegates from the Western Synod were joined by a number from the Eastern portion of the Church.—B.]

favorably received by this Synod.\* It resolved to refer the Revised Liturgy to the General Synod for further action. Meanwhile its optional use was allowed until the whole matter should be finally settled by the General Synod. Thus the matter came before the *General Synod held in Dayton* at the close of 1866—(six weeks after the Synod of York.—B.)

According to a resolution of the General Synod of 1863, the Western Synod was also to submit a revised plan of Liturgy to this General Synod, but its work was not yet ready. Nevertheless the Synod of Dayton entered upon the consideration of the work of the Eastern (provincial) Synod. The debates were extremely animated. The one party demanded or hoped for the endorsement of the New Order of Worship, which they regarded as a work of art cast from *one* mould; the other party, to which Dr. Williard, Profs. Good and Rust, Stern and others belonged, desired that the General Synod should not commit itself to the merits of the work. The Synod resolved, by a vote of 64 to 57, to allow the use of the Liturgy, so that the congregations might, after a trial of it, decide upon its merits.

This result corresponded with that reached in the case of the Prov. Lit. (1857,) but could only be justified if the objections of the opponents, that the New Order contained erroneous doctrines, departures from the old Reformed faith, and Romanizing tendencies, were refuted. Doubtless the opponents of the new Liturgy are placed in a difficult position since the General Synod has declared allowable, at least in a preliminary way, without further examination, forms of worship and doctrines which are deemed unevangelical and Romanizing. Should no way of escape open, the opponents seem shut up to the choice of schism, or subjection to the action of the General Synod and its consequences. In Dr. Bomberger's tract the seriousness of the situation is delineated. (p. 113, etc.) But he is unwilling that desperate means should be employed. In his judgment two-thirds of the clergy, and most of the congregations, have not accepted of the ritualistic principles, but resist the encroachments. They have not even dreamed of such changes as are proposed, and the extremes will produce a reaction of the old affections of the Church. The New Order has not yet been formally adopted, and it is still to be hoped that after its ritualistic

[\* This statement needs qualification. Dr. Dorner could not learn all the facts in the case from the published minutes. Stronger and more general opposition to the whole movement showed itself at the York Synod than at any previous time.—B.]

principle has been fully developed and its consequences revealed, even its friends will not press it upon the congregations. He proposes as a remedy, to go back to the Prov. Liturgy, which contains the elements of the New Order though in other combinations and in only *one* part of the work, and without the extremely *one-sided* carrying out of those elements which is found in the New Order. The Prov. Liturgy, which contains all needful material, may be modified; an altar-service, in an evangelical sense, the confession of sin, the Lord's Supper, Apostles' Creed, a few simple responses, and prayers for the leading festivals, may be allowed. But every phrase which seems contrary to pure doctrine should be changed. This done, many who have been unfavorable even to modern liturgical changes, would yield, whilst the friends of extremes would only concede only what is justly required for the peace of the Church. That these declarations are temperate in their character, and aim at the peace of the Church, no one can dispute.

Against this tract of Bomberger, Dr. Nevin issued his "Vindication of the Revised Liturgy," (1867.) The historical part (pp. 1-48) contains an excited vindication against the reproach that the Liturgical Committee, especially Dr. N., had been pursuing a subtle scheme to gain their point, now by affected hesitation, then by preferring their ritualistic tendencies in opposition to the instructions of Synod. From all we know of the very honorable character of Dr. Nevin, this accusation has been made with haste and injustice. There is no reason to doubt that Dr. N. had not this liturgical system at the start; and as in the course of the work it developed itself gradually in him, (of course from principles which he had long before embraced, and connected with a strong aversion to sectism and religious subjectivism,) it may be assumed, that so far as he himself was clearly conscious of the fact, he did not conceal it from the Synod, which, in spite of his open avowal of his convictions, yet without approving of them, continued to appoint him as one whose spirit and learning made him indispensable to the committee, in which, also, his views prevailed.

But if, so far as the seventeen year's history of this Liturgy is concerned, we cannot in this respect assert to the moral censure passed upon the course of the committee and of Dr. Nevin, the *dogmatic* question, *does the New Order depart from the fundamental evangelical Reformed faith?* is of decided significance in the controversy.

Were this the case, the work would be in this respect condemned. For the faith of a Church may not be changed under pretence of a li-

turgical reform; a Liturgy is a secondary growth, dependant upon the faith of the Church. The committee had neither the authority nor right to depart from that faith. And were but the suspicion of such departures, which may attach to ambiguous forms, not avoided, it is manifest that not only their adoption, but even permission to use them would be premature. Were the committee or Dr. Nevin conscious of doctrinal departures from the Reformed faith, their personal belief that in this way purer ancient Christian truth would be restored, no way justifies their attempt, by means of a Liturgy, to secure admission and even ascendancy for dogmatic views antagonistic to the Reformed faith. For a Liturgy is not intended to be a means of innoculating a Church with new doctrines, but simply to furnish proper expression to its acknowledged faith. The development of doctrine, which of course should not be prevented in the evangelical Church, must precede and obtain official recognition in some other way.

We proceed, therefore, to consider more closely the second or *theological* part of Dr. N's tract, and the *doctrinal* contents of the New Order. In doing this use shall be made of the essay of S. Miller, on Mercersburg theology, although Dr. N. is not to be held responsible for all the views of this spirited admirer of that theology. But the close relationship and essential agreement of both can hardly be disclaimed, especially after reading Dr. Harbaugh's "Christological Theology." Miller's book is an important symptom of doctrinal tastes and tendencies in one portion of the German Reformed Church in America.

Nevin says: The Revised Liturgy (or New Order of Worship) represents one system of religious thinking—the opposition another. Both differ in their design and repel each other. It is not a question of dissatisfaction with single doctrinal statements in the Order; the war is waged against its entire doctrinal basis. The complaints against it on account of certain conflicts with orthodoxy, Nevin thinks were proven untenable and false.\* In his view the objection to it sprang from want of sympathy with the true idea of the Gospel, which found expression in the Liturgy. It was shown† that the opponents

\* This, in my judgment, was not done at the Synod. Doctrinal points were but little discussed by the opposition at Dayton.

† This also does not appear from the full proceedings published in the "Ref. Ch. Messenger," a paper favorable to Nevin. On the contrary, the opponents of the Revised Liturgy lay emphasis on all the leading doctrines of the old Reformed faith. This fact is set forth in the admirable essay of RUETENIK, (Ref. Waechter, p. 196.)

of the Liturgy were themselves theologically unsound because they stood in a system which so far as it prevailed involved a ritualistic undermining of the entire Christian faith. Thus he seeks to cast the complaints of the opponents back on themselves, and to show that their point of view is "heretical" in the worst sense of the word, so far as they have any theological sense of the significance of their opposition (pp. 50-53.) It was plainly shown at the Dayton Synod that the liturgical question was a theological one of the deepest import, and concerned not one or two points of theological opinion, but theology as a whole.

What now, he asks, (p. 55,) is the reigning theology of the Revised Liturgy? "It is sometimes spoken of in this country as the Mercersburg theology. But the system is far wider in fact than any such name; and no name of this sort besides can give us any true insight into its interior character and constitution. What we need here is not a distinctive title for the theology in question, but a distinguishing apprehension of its nature. For our present purpose it may answer to characterize it descriptively, (without intending to exhaust the subject) under a threefold view. In the first place it is Christological, or more properly perhaps Christocentric; in the second place, it moves in the bosom of the Apostles' Creed; in the third place, it is objective and historical, involving thus the idea of the Church as a perennial article of faith."

By the *Christocentric* character of theology, he says is meant not simply that Christ is the author of its contents, but that these gather themselves in Him as their primal root. Christianity, as an object of faith and knowledge, and in the only form in which it has been realized in the world, was introduced through the mystery of the incarnation, and is perpetuated under the power and presence of that fact. All its truths, doctrines, promises, all its life-giving powers, are rooted continually in the undying life of Christ. Our *apprehension*, also, of this objective constitution of Christianity, must correspond with its character, and must rest firmly and clearly upon the proposition:

who also shows that even Nevin does not wholly deny any evangelical doctrine, but gives them a relatively new position by which their sense and significance are changed, and the spirit and meaning of the old Palatinate Liturgy, as he proves in several particulars, are either suppressed or altered. Thus Nevin's Christology makes the incarnation and life of Christ the centre, not His death and atonement. So, likewise, Harbaugh's Christol. Theology.

Christ is the principle of Christianity. Thus a theology is obtained which revolves around Christ as its centre, and is irradiated at every point by the light which streams from His presence.

All this sounds well, and the opposition party would hardly raise objections to it. But the main thing concerns the carrying out of this general proposition.

Nevin proceeds: To a right apprehension or *knowledge* of all this, everything depends upon having a right point of view from which to contemplate it. Facts and forms in themselves are not enough. They must be seen in their proper relations. But to this it is necessary that the beholder occupy a position which will enable him to see things in their right relations. Even a landscape can be advantageously seen only from the proper position. Astronomy shows that so long as the earth was regarded as the centre of the system, all was distorted, and the most artificial assumptions were necessary until the Copernican heliocentric system triumphed. The Christocentric position is for the contemplation of the heavenly and eternal things of theology, what the Copernican system is for astronomy. Any other involves boundless errors and confusion. Another may be taken, indeed fallen reason constantly strives to occupy other centres. There may be a humanitarian, anthropological theology, centering wholly in the idea of man, in which earth rules heaven, and the merely moral or ethical plays itself off as the divine. Or there may be a purely theological theology, a construction of theology starting from the idea of God, considered absolutely and theocentrically outside of Christ, in which the relations of God to the world become pantheistic, fantastic, visionary and unreal, so that all religion resolves itself at last into metaphysical speculations and theosophic dreams.\* These false projections of Christian doctrine, though antagonistic, have everlastingly intermingled through all Protean shapes, and made themselves felt in all possible forms, from their first bad birth as Ebionism and Gnosticism, down to Socinianism and Anabaptism, the metaphysical Calvinism of the sixteenth century, and to corresponding forms of religious thought down to our own time. All this, he says, shows how necessary it is to have a construction of

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\* These are assertions without proof. Christology, as well as anthropology, must ever start with God. Nevin argues as though there could be no idea of God which is not inimical to Christology, or as though Christianity did not supply the idea of God in itself certain, in the light of which even Christ must be contemplated, just as we cannot have a correct idea of Him apart from the general idea of God.

Christian doctrine that shall start from the right point of observation—and how much is involved in the proposition that the Person of Christ furnishes this point. The proposition itself needs no proof; it is a first principle, a self-evident axiom in Christianity. Christ is the Alpha and Omega, the light of the world; the natural world begins and ends in Him. (John 1: 3; Col. 1: 16, 17.) No less the ethical world, the movement of humanity, the world of history. It is not chaotic, the sport of blind chance or iron fate; Christ is in it, causing all its powers to converge to what shall be found to be in the end the world's last sense in the finished work of redemption. In a word, the world of revelation begins and ends in Him. (pp. 56–8.) It is not a number of independent divine utterances, but a single economy or system through which God has made himself progressively known, not in the way, primarily, of doctrine, but of fact; and the entire movement has its principle or root from the first in Christ, centering at last in the historical fact of the incarnation, and running its course thence onward to the hour of His second appearing. Jesus Christ is the Alpha and Omega of all these worlds, (nature, history and grace,) and as such the principle, centre and end, in which they all meet and gather themselves together finally as one. Thus He is the key to the correct knowledge of the world, of man, and of God. He, in the mysterious constitution of His blessed Person, is the *first object* of Christian faith. Without this key we can understand nothing correctly in the sphere of revelation. The Old Testament has no sure sense or force except in the Christological sense of its being a subordinate pedagogy to prepare the way for the coming of Christ in the flesh. It has no power to explain Christ, save only as it is itself made intelligible first in and through Christ. "Then, as regards Christianity itself, strictly taken, what is it, we may well ask, in difference from all pretending to call itself religion, if it be not the product and outgrowth of the new order of life, which first became actual in the world by the assumption of our human nature into union with the Divine Word, having in this view its beginning, middle and end, in Christ and in Christ only."

Hence Christianity, as to its objective constitution, and as standing actually and wholly in the historical life of Christ, the Alpha and Omega, sum and substance of its whole existence, can be understood, either practically as a system of life, or doctrinally as a system of theology, only by occupying the Christocentric standpoint. To comprehend the world which grace has made, we must take our position in



the great primordial centre, from which all has been evolved. On that we must fix our spiritual telescope and try to scan the wonders thus offered to our contemplation, since from any other centre they will either not be seen at all, or be seen in distorted forms, and in more or less false relations and proportions. This centrality of Christ in the Christian system, reaches into all its parts. Practically, all righteousness, morality, virtue, in the Christian sense, grow out of "the law of the spirit of life in Jesus Christ." All sound Christian feeling and experience flow from the sense of Him formed in us as the hope of glory. And so intellectually, also, Christ is our wisdom, the principle of all true illumination, through whom alone we know man, his original destination, the full extent of his fall, the true nature of sin, the meaning of death, the idea of redemption. Through Him alone, do we come to the true understanding of God, in which rests our eternal life.

The theology (the Mercersburg) involved in this controversy, Nevin proceeds, in this handsome and eloquent description, bears decidedly this character. It revolves around Christ. It has been strangely enough charged at times with subordinating the idea of Christ to that of the Church; but this is a gross mistake. It does indeed lay stress on the doctrine of the Church, as on the Apostles' Creed, but only as the Church is, according to the Creed, the necessary consequence of Christ, never as putting the Church in Christ's stead. No theology has insisted more earnestly upon the cardinal truths of the Trinity, the Eternal Generation, the Divinity of the Son, the Mediatorial work and Kingdom of Christ; and none, it may be safely asserted, has done more, within the same time, to awaken and enforce attention to the practical significance of these truths in the American religious world.

After this full statement of Dr. Nevin's views, we may be allowed to add some remarks. There is, indeed, cause for joy in the spirited and vigorous confession of great truths contained in what has been set forth. But whilst I so far accept the appeal made to my writings by Dr. N. at Dayton, his views require analyzing in many of the above points—*points at which our paths no longer run parallel, since Dr. N. is led by them to positions regarding the Church, which he does not correctly derive from me, nay which no longer seem evangelical and which he himself must discard if he acknowledges the principle of the Reformation in its full significance and force.*

We connect with this what he says about occupying a *right position* towards the object, in order to see divine things from a right point of

view, as they are in truth. This point of view from which it must be possible sharply to distinguish the centre from its radii and the periphery, is, according to the common Reformed doctrine, the correct personal constitution and capacity of man, in *one word faith*, the necessary condition of all sound Christian knowledge. This faith has attained its most intensive and pure idea and form in the evangelical Church, and that as faith in redemption (above all justification) through Christ. This faith possesses the divine certainty of salvation granted through the God-man. In the consciousness of redemption and its truth, dwells at the same time, and with *one act*, principally, the consciousness of the Redeemer, of His dignity and truth. *To affirm a true and certain knowledge of Christ before the experience of His redemptive power, is Pelagian. A supposed knowledge prior to such personal experience is but the reflection of a second-hand faith or knowledge in us, and essentially a mere faith on outward authority, even though more commendable in its place.* But by the knowledge of faith through religious experience, the believer is lifted beyond all mere human authority (as that of the Church,) yea above the mere external authority of the Holy Scriptures, because he has experienced in himself, through the Holy Ghost, that the Word of God is truth, whether written or spoken by the Church. Hence faith, in an evangelical sense, is the position or point of view from which the true nature of Christianity can be discerned. And faith is the eye too or organ for such knowledge. But the primitive contents, of which faith becomes assured, are in a word (in nuce) the objective and subjective treasures of entire Christianity.

Dr. Nevin evidently thinks otherwise. To faith in the Reformed sense, he does not refer in this decisive passage. For him Christ is the self-revealing centre for Christianity; *and here where it should be named, no mention is made of the necessity of conversion, as a proper condition and basis of true knowledge, as though every man in Christendom understood of himself that Christ was this centre.* Instead of first teaching how a man becomes a Christian, (a phenomenology of faith and a Christian theory of knowledge,) and how the organ as well as principle for an ever extending Christian knowledge are given to such certainty of faith (of the truth,) he places Christology immediately in front as the primordial and central truth. 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. This, in my opinion, is an

error of method which involves serious consequences for his whole system. Christology, especially in its definite dogmatic contour, the discovery of which is the result of prolonged historical study, is here wrested from a scientific exposition and construction, whilst it should rather constitute the immutable condition of the whole system of dogmatics. Whilst in fact God and man precede the incarnation, and in its two-fold nature the elements are supplied out of which a Christology can first be constructed, it, rather, is made the primordial centre from which objectively, as for knowledge, everything flows; as though Christ could be the condition of God, also, or as though the Church were Christ. Should it be said, however, that not a formal Christology, but only its germ, must be the condition of the theological system, we ask, how can we come even to this very germ? Nevin might answer: through the Church, which bears Christ. But a system must treat of truth and the certainty of it. Do we obtain this through the Church and her own authentication? Then we have abandoned in principle evangelical ground, and the Church is elevated above Christ and His Spirit, because she authenticates Christ. Should he on the contrary, say with the evangelical Church: through the power of self-authenticating objective truth by the Holy Ghost, he could not forget that not every one experiences this, or all who hear this Word would possess it. Hence, whilst all lie captive in like sin and unbelief, those only would attain to that certainty in whom a change had taken place through conversion and faith. First in their being redeemed would they inwardly and certainly know of Christ as Redeemer; and this is an unavoidable condition of true knowledge. Indeed, this factor of personal assurance by faith of objective truth is so important, that it is allowed the right of critical investigation into the canon and its inward harmony, but especially of criticising doctrinal theories and the Church.

Nevin, on the contrary, takes the antique, partly anti-Reformed ground, that the dogmatic products of the ancient Church in their purely objective force, form the basis and condition of his system; hence he is silent regarding the fundamental import of faith in an evangelical system, and does not even intimate that in this system, strictly taken, nothing properly finds a place which has not passed through experimental faith and thus obtained the seal of certain personal knowledge.

The theology of our day, viewed from this point, is divided into three chief groups. The *first* regards the old oecumenical symbols of the Church as her direct immovable foundation, little caring how we

attain to a certain knowledge of their contents, or that the authority of the Church is thus fixed as the ultimate reason of faith, and the evangelical basis of faith thereby denied. The *second* takes its stand in the Reformation, which was chiefly concerned with a personal assurance of salvation by Christ, and of the truth; but which, to save subjective rights and give them free scope, does not recognize fixed objective claims, as they are presented in the Scriptures, preferring to exclude everything as foreign or unessential that lies beyond its own religious experience. It deals thus, especially, with the so-called objective doctrines, and at least with a part of the oecumenical confessions. Both these groups are unhistorical; the latter sundering itself from the entire ante-Reformation period and its development, which it regards as merely a vast error. But the more it loses firm hold of fixed Christian objectivity, and even the canon becomes uncanonical for it, the more does it also lose Christian certainty and faith. For both have the *same contents*, to which they are related. Thus the same process is repeated through which philosophy based in a one-sided way on subjective certainty passed, to Fichte's time. But the first group is, in its way, also unhistorical and revolutionary; for it *breaks with the Reformation*, and the free personal appropriation of truth which it demands, and undervalues the need of salvation and truth. It overleaps that work of God, the Reformation, in which the Church advanced to higher ground in the appropriation of Christian truth, in order immediately to return to the ancient Church. *We will not pronounce this necessarily Romanizing, even if specific Romish errors are (inconsequently) happily avoided; such a theology acquires of more an oriental type. It must place the divine constitution of the Church higher than faith, through which, according to Reformed views, the Church is first formed, and this must necessarily develop into a sacramental and hierarchical character.*

Nevin's method could only be admitted if the subject and object of theology were identical, and the believer could say: "I am Christ," and the Church were simply "Christus explicitus," (Christ developed)—or if the doctrinal principle were identical with the practical principle of knowledge. If subjectivity (personal knowledge and faith, B.) be thus pushed from its proper place by the Christian object (of knowledge and faith, B.), religion or faith would be confounded with theology, (which is very unhappily the case with Dr. Nevin in distinction from his opponents,) and the latter is discussed as though it were itself religion. If Nevin took faith in the evangelical sense as the condition of theology, and scientifically presented the factors which enter into it,

he would find the true union of the subjective and objective factors in faith as united with the Holy Scriptures, but at the same time see that more than *one method* was admissible in developing the contents of faith. For why, for example, should not God be the starting point of our dogmatic system, without trenching upon Christology, even though we allow that we come to the Father through the Son? Such a system, however, might well be called *theocentric*, and be in harmony with the truth that God in Christ (as before Christ) as *λόγος* is not only the centre of nature as well as of natural and Old Testament history, but is also the centre of the kingdom of grace and of glory.

In opposition to these two groups of theology there is, therefore, properly a *third* which alone has the promise of the future. This is *the* theology which, being *truly historical*, breaks neither with the ancient Church nor with the Reformation, but is in essential unison with both and seeks accordingly to recognize the continuity of the life of the Church. It is in accordance with nature and fact that as sons of the Reformation we start from the Reformed standpoint, that we therefore insist upon a free conscious personal appropriation of salvation and Christian truth; an aim which, according to the rule of all theology, must influence first principles, even, and avoid everything opposed to it, or fettering it as the authority of the Church as an ultimate law of truth. In this respect the Church at the Reformation entered upon the anthropological-soteriological stadium (as compared with the Christological-Trinitarian period.) But she by no means became anthropocentric in Dr. N's sense. Faith in salvation, with its free appropriation and personal certainty, cannot exist, unless the *object* (of faith) is offered by the Holy Scriptures and their proclamation by the Church; and these contents of the plain preaching of salvation, through the Scriptures or the Church, as they are comprehended, f. i., in the Apostles' Creed, possess the power of making themselves evident to a penitent faith and mind. But thus we obtain not only a real identity with the ancient faith of the Creed, but also, if a theological consciousness is connected with it, with the Trinitarian and Christological doctrines of the ancient Church, as a rich and valuable inheritance; which, however, so far as the more strict dogmatic products of the ecclesiastical laboratory are concerned, must be assumed only sous le bénéfice de l'inventaire, (under the terms of the inventory.) If this includes the right of evangelical faith to criticise the doctrinal decrees of the Church, and to hold to the fallibility of the Church instead of yielding to her claim to be the highest authority for faith, it

is only a faith approved by the Scriptures which is entitled to exercise such criticism over against the Church.

A *second characteristic trait* of the theology of the new Liturgy is, according to Dr. Nevin, that it is *ruled by the Apostles' Creed*. (pp. 60-65.) The Creed is said to be not a summary of Christian doctrine for the understanding, "but the necessary form of the Gospel, as this is first apprehended by faith; a direct transcript of what the Gospel is to the contemplation of the believer, turned wholly upon the Person of Christ. Faith must necessarily be ruled by its object, the Creed must be Christological, must unfold itself in the order of what are to be regarded as the fundamental facts of Christianity, growing forth from the mystery of the Incarnation. Thus viewed, there is no room to speak of two or more methods of faith, in the sense of the Gospel. As there is but one method of the objective movement of the Gospel in Christ Himself, so there can be only one method of the apprehension of it on the part of believers. That method we have in the Apostles' Creed, and any attempt to set this aside, to substitute for it some different construction of first principles, or to subordinate its proper normative authority and signification to any later type of belief, must be looked upon at once as a serious falling away from the Gospel, and may be expected to result at last in the confusion and eclipse of faith altogether."

Nevin's theology, therefore, claims the honor, not merely of seeing the immanent logic of faith in the Creed, so that faith determined by it is determined by the central object of faith; but his theology makes a decided difference between carrying out a theological system of theology according to the type of doctrine furnished by the Creed, or in some other way. Everything depends here on the relation of the doctrines to each other; "here the form is everything, the matter is nothing except as embraced in this form." It is a vain pretence to say that the Creed is essentially a true though defective representation of the Gospel, and then to work up its material into a supposed better scheme of doctrine, projected from another standpoint, and moving in a totally different line of thought. No Confession, Catechism, preaching, worship, system of divinity of this sort, can ever breathe the spirit of the Creed, or have in it the true life of the Creed. Of course the Creed gives only the primordial articles of the immediate panoramic vision of faith. But within the range of this regulative scheme there is room for any amount of scientific study and enlargement, through the use of what matter is offered to our knowledge in

God's Revelation, and in the exercise of reason now enlightened and purified by God's Holy Spirit. But through all such enlargement, the organization of doctrine remains fundamentally the same, faith and doctrine have their position, relation and proper quality in the system only as they grow out of the form of the Creed.\*

It must be acknowledged that Nevin's theology has restored the Creed to a degree of honor which, according to his statement, it had lost in America, especially in "Puritan theology." But the high position which he assigns to it, whilst the Holy Scriptures are not taken into account according to their fundamental significance, but only supplementarily for the purpose of enlarging the knowledge imparted by the Creed, reminds us of such phenomena as Lessing, Grundtvig, etc., and of the perils of such an exaltation of the earliest Church symbol above the Holy Scriptures. For Nevin, it is the only and exclusive original form of Christianity worthy to be taught. But this will hardly harmonize with the earliest traces of Apostolic preaching and missionary activity (found f. i., in Hebr. 6; 1, etc.; Acts 14; 17,) which moved much more freely. Moreover, Nevin overlooks the fact that the Creed is Trinitarian and theocentric, not properly Christological, in its structure.

As now, the Creed is a work of the Church, it follows from its supremacy, even contrary to the Holy Scriptures, that it forms for Nevin the first link in the chain, so that the Church may be invested with divine authority and a Catholicizing posture in regard to the personal faith, even at the expense of Reformation principles. Besides, as Dr. N. knew very well of the different forms through which the Creed passed, and that the Romish form was not generally adopted until after the fourth century, a little more critical care were desirable, so that its value might not depend upon single variable words and forms, but upon its matter and fundamental structure. Whilst, furthermore, as we said, Christology is the only position, according to Nevin, from which to start, the starting point of the Creed is God, the Father, Almighty maker of heaven and of earth; and whilst N's theology requires us to

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\* It would follow thence, that not only for us, but the Church in herself, yea the Communion of Saints, exists prior to the forgiveness of sins or justification; exists, therefore, before there are any believers or justified ones, which, of itself, implies that the Church is above all to be regarded as a sacramental divine institution. But this is manifestly contradicted by the entire (form of the) Creed, which commences not with the Church, but with the thrice repeated: I believe, (Credo.)

contemplate everything *from the point of Christology*, this is itself the *object* in the largest part of the Creed.

A *third mark* of the theology which underlies the new Liturgy, is designated by Nevin (66-72) as its *objective and historical character*. "It is not a system of subjective notions, a metaphysical theory of God and religion born only of the human mind, a supposed apprehension of supernatural verities brought into the mind in the way of abstract thought; but the apprehension of the supernatural by faith under the form of an actual divine manifestation in and through Christ, which, as such, rules and governs the power that perceives it, while it is felt also to be joined in its own order to the natural history of the world onward through all time." "God does not speak to the souls of men immediately and abruptly, as enthusiasts and fanatics fondly dream; that would be magic, and gives us the Pagan idea of religion, not the Christian." All inward illumination is primarily something that God does, objective. What is subjective follows experimentally, but so that it is only the presence of the supernatural which causes it to be felt in the world. The whole significance of Christianity is comprehended in the divine deed whereby God manifested Himself in the flesh. "This objective act is itself the Gospel, and it must underlie and condition all that the Gospel can ever become for men in the way of inward experience." True, it cannot save men without their being brought to experience its power; hence they must come into relation to it through faith." But for this reason the power that saves lies not in our experience or our faith, but wholly in the object with which our faith is concerned.\* The subjective here, sundered from the objective, can give at least only a spurious evangelicism more allied to the flesh than to the Spirit."

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\* True; but the question remains: where and how does this object exist? Has God so entered into the world that He is no longer above it (transcendent) but only in it (immanent)? That would involve something Pantheistic and so far "Pagan," a fettering of God to place and time. Or has Christ so incorporated Himself with the Church that He is no longer transcendent relatively to it, not even through the Holy Ghost, but is the measure of the life and power of the Church that of His power and His life? Then has He gone down (the Reformers said: *buried*) in the Church; *His reputed glory is an abdication*. We must therefore ask, does Nevin regard the Church as a continuation of Christ, or does he assign Christ a place in distinction from the Church? Any such distinction, however, must vanish in proportion as, above all, only the communication of His life is derived from Christ, whilst the atonement and justification in their proper signification are slighted.

This established, he continues—and so passes on to a sort of *deification of the Church*—the revelation of God in Christ must necessarily be *historical*, because objective, for our faith. It would not be truly objective if it did not enter, as a supernatural principle, *permanently into the stream of the world's life*, “not just as the memory of a past wonder, but as the continued working of the power it carried with it in the beginning. The Gospel is supernatural; but it is the supernatural joined in a new order of existence to the natural, and this it can be only in the form of history. In any other form it becomes shadowy and unreal, notional and visionary.” The Gospel is historical first of all in *Christ's Person* and work. The articles of the Creed are not just so many theological propositions loosely thrown together, but phases that mark the progress of the dramatic development of His Mediatorial life out to its last consequences in the full salvation of His people.

This, however, involves also the historical character of Christianity, which is only “the carrying out of this mystery of godliness among men to the end of time.” Not only the subjective religious experiences of men enter into the general flow of history, but the objective reality from which Christianity springs, the new order of existence which was constituted for the world by the great fact of the Incarnation, must be allowed also to be historical.\* It lies in the very conception of the Gospel in this objective view, that its supernatural economy should be of perennial force; that its powers of salvation should be once for all; not in the sense of something completed and left behind, but in the sense of what, having once entered into the life of the world, has become incorporated with it, as a part of its history, to the close of time. *This supernatural economy to be real, must have its own sphere; it is an order of grace flowing out of Christ*, wholly different from the order of nature, and nothing more or less than the idea of

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\* Certainly Christianity must ever exist as a historical power; Nevin's opponents would also require this. But the question is: does this perennial existence consist in the fact that the Word and Sacraments will never cease, or that believers will never die out, in whom the union with Christ's Spirit is perpetuated, but who cannot be sensibly and visibly distinguished in the present period of the world; or is this junction with Christ firmly bound to one class (priests,) and is it propagated everywhere by the sacramental acts of priests? As faith cannot be expelled by witchcraft, this will be affirmed only by those who attach no importance to faith—that is, by those who, in a Romanizing way, grasp after a magical opus operatum.

“the Holy Catholic Church,” (68.) The Person and work of Christ, properly held fast in their objective, historical character, cannot be allowed to lose themselves in the agency of the Spirit, but require also an objective and historical sphere, in which alone the Holy Ghost of the Gospel is to be regarded as working. “*This is the Church* which here becomes a necessary postulate of the Christian faith,” as it is included, also, in the Creed as a necessary process of the whole matter. As an article of faith, apart (?) from all questions of outward organization and form, in distinction from the world in its simply natural constitution, it is an order or constitution of grace as supernatural as Christ Himself is, from whom it flows, and so an object of faith. The theology which acknowledges this is churchly; it believes in a sphere of supernatural powers and forces flowing from the historical fact of Christ's birth, death and glorification, themselves historical, not magical, and present in the world in broad distinction from the economy of nature. In the bosom of this Church exclusively, can the Gospel be expected to work as the wisdom of God and power of God unto salvation. So far as this goes, it owns that the Church is a medium of communication between Christ and His people. “They must be in the order of His grace, in the sphere where this objective working of His grace is actually going forward, if the work of redemption and sanctification is to be carried forward in them with full effect. In this sense, most assuredly, salvation is of the Church (as its work) and not of the world, and to look for it in the world where Satan reigns, by private spiritualistic negotiations with God, professedly and purposely pouring contempt on the idea of all Church intervention,\* is to look for it where it is not to be found.” (p. 70.)

Nevin is right when he adds that all this means a great deal, and draws many things after it by necessary consequence. He says that his theology rests in a wholly different style of religious thought from that of the antiliturgical party; that they are two different versions of the Gospel, yea two Gospels arrayed against each other, so that each must look upon the other as wrong and false.

Such a churchly theology, he proceeds, must be a *sacramental and li-*

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\* Rather: “where the means of grace are despised.” But “believers” are the Church, not “the means of grace,” around which believers gather. We cannot say, therefore, that salvation is of the Church, or that the Church “mediates between God and His people.” God's people are the Church, and they stand in immediate relation to Christ, even though through the means of grace.

*turgical theology.* If the Church is the conjunction of the supernatural and natural in one and the same abiding economy of grace, its sacraments cannot be regarded as outward signs only of what they represent. They are for faith, seals also of the realities which they exhibit—mysteries in which the visible and invisible are bound together by the power of the Holy Ghost, not physically or locally, but so that the presence of the one is in truth the presence of the other. The sacramental feeling, however, must also show itself as a *liturgical* feeling, and this an “altar-liturgy.” A mere pulpit liturgy, a handbook of forms for the exclusive use of the minister, must ever seem to it, in comparison, something very unrefreshing, not to say miserably cold and dry (p. 71.)

The theology which opposes the liturgical movement, he affirms, does not respect the Creed, does not preach Christ as the Alpha and Omega of the new Church, as the beginning, middle, and end of the Gospel, cannot endure St. John’s searching test. Whilst the Gospel of the Creed is throughout Christological, centres in Christ and sees in the objective working of this mystery of godliness the whole process of grace and redemption down to the resurrection of the dead and eternal life; the other scheme of doctrine, which may be called the Gospel of Puritanism, places in stead of all this a construction of Christianity which is purely subjective, centering in the human spirit, since it lays stress not upon the contents of objective faith, but upon subjective faith, and the inward assurance of salvation through the Holy Ghost, who is not regarded as holding an organic relation to Christ; and, furthermore, it substitutes ideas for facts, metaphysical abstractions for proper objects of faith, and thus resolves all religion into sheer spiritualism, which makes no account of any objective mediation of grace outside of man, but assumes of every (?) man that he stands in direct, face to face, relation to God, and possesses in his simple “evangelical” notions all he needs to secure success to the divine presence.\*

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\* This delineation of his opponents is grossly unjust, especially in regard to the emphasis they lay upon objective Christian facts and truths. The doctrine of those facts and truths is, indeed, not the thing itself, is not Christ, but a representation, an exhibition of the thing. On this point Nevin himself fails of the mark. His opponents, on the other hand, lay more stress on (the fact and truth of) the death of Christ than he does. He, however, like the Greek Church, lays chief emphasis upon the Incarnation.

Nothing is more common, says Nevin, than to reproach Mercersburg theology, with placing Christ and our immediate relation to Him below the Church. This reproach, he thinks however, may be hurled back upon “Puritan theology” itself. “The charge of not preaching Christ, (he knows) is one which this theology thinks the least that can be seriously brought against it. It pleases itself (he says) with the imagination of being evangelical because it professes to make everything of Christ and Him crucified, and in certain phases is forever ringing changes on themes of righteousness and free redemption.” “Is it not the boast of our unchurchly sects, all the land over, that *they* preach Christ and Christianity in opposition to such as lay stress upon the idea of the Church, the sacraments, and on outward forms in any way, denouncing every intervention of this sort, as externalism, ecclesiasticism, sacerdotalism, ritualism, or something equally bad, that serves only to obscure the Saviour’s glory, and to block up the way to His presence. Who in the world do preach Christ, it may be asked, if it be not these sects, for whom Christ is thus, nominally, all in all?” With more bitterness than truth he replies (p. 77 :) This we understand. It is an old song; as old as the Gnostics and Phrygian Montanists. They indeed preach Christ as come in the flesh, but resolve His coming in the flesh into a mere speculative dream.\* For them Christ has not come in the flesh for all time; they do not confess the historical Christ of the Incarnation, the onward flow of His life transmitting itself, according to Nevin, through Baptism and the Holy Supper, but He is long since sublimated for them in the clouds. “But this is the very spirit of anti-Christ, just because it sets up a Christ which is the creature of its own subjective thinking, in place of the only true objective and historical Christ.”

An identification of the Church, in its actual historical manifestation, with Christ, underlies this entire statement. According to Nevin, only he believes in an objective and historical Christ, who sees in the Church, not merely the witness of Christ, but the historically self-unfolding and developing Christ Himself; and only in this sense does Nevin acknowledge an immediate relation between Christ and believers. That propitiation is thus made to stand back of this Church, is seen in the fact that his theory expatiates almost exclusively upon the

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\* That is because the actual Church is not regarded by them as being of course the continuation or development of Christ Himself (*Christus explicitus*)! The mistake which Nevin here makes appears in what immediately follows.

mystical communication of the life of Christ, on the expansion of the theanthropic life, whilst it says little of justification, but rather merges this in sanctification. For the Church can be thus identified with Christ only by ignoring the work of the atonement and justification, (which rests in the earthly and heavenly Highpriesthood of Christ,) in its important principal signification, and by laying the whole weight upon the powers of sanctification which are involved in the Church, and which are mediated to believers through the Church and her organs, and only through them. The following statement of *Nevin* makes this still clearer: "Where the Gospel (he says) is not apprehended as the historical, enduring, objective manifestation of God in the flesh, there can be no *steady apprehension* of that which constitutes the proper mystery of it in this view, namely, the union there is in it of the supernatural with the natural in an abiding, historical (not magical) form. This precisely, is the true object of all evangelical faith in the New Testament sense; the objective power of salvation, through the apprehension of which only, faith becomes justifying and saving faith." (p. 78.)

We omit the violent assaults upon his opponents (p. 78, etc.,) Presbyterians, Calvinists, Americans, etc., whom he charges with extreme subjectivism, however firmly they may cling to the free grace of God in Christ, to Christ especially as crucified, and to justification by faith alone. Possibly these may lay too little stress upon the unity of the Church, and the Sacraments, falling short of Calvin in both respects. *But why does Nevin no longer appeal to Calvin as he formerly did? Why does he now array himself so openly and decidedly against Calvinistic theology, notwithstanding that he must acknowledge the Heidelberg Catechism (which is essentially Calvinistic,) as the doctrinal standard of his Church? Surely, he himself moves in a subjectivism of his own which deceives itself with a pretended "objectivism." For where does he get his certainty of his idea of the Church, and where its proofs? Most loosely and arbitrarily does he accept what the ante-Reformation Church says of itself, whilst he still does not recognize the Papacy as a divine institution, and yet by rejecting which he must, to be consistent, reject all that belongs to it as its germs.* How a man can, by faith, become divinely and joyfully assured of his personal salvation, and so of Christ as his Redeemer, can be the more easily comprehended, as the power of the accepted Gospel testifies of itself. But how faith attains to a certainty of *Nevin's* theory of the Church, if not arbitrarily or by an arbitrary subjection to churchly authority, cannot be seen.

But we pass on to notice particularly *Nevin's* doctrine of *Ordination, Confirmation, Confession and Absolution, Baptism and the Lord's Supper*, which he discusses apologetically and polemically (pp. 80, etc.,) and which possess special significance for a living cultus.

*Ordination* is openly designated by *Nevin* as a *sacrament*. The New Order says: (p. 215) "The office is of divine origin and of truly supernatural character and force; flowing directly from the Lord Jesus Christ Himself as the fruit of His resurrection and triumphant ascension into heaven, and being designed by Him to carry forward the purpose of His grace upon the earth *in the salvation of men by the Church* to the end of time," and p. 216: "The first ministers were apostles, who were called and commissioned immediately by Jesus Christ Himself. They, in turn, ordained and set apart other suitable men as pastors and teachers, \* \* and these again, in the same way appointed and sent forth others to carry onward and forward still the true succession of this office; which being regularly transmitted in this way from age to age in the Christian Church, has come down to our time. The solemnity of Ordination, through which this transmission flows, is not merely an impressive ceremony by which the right of such as are called of God to the ministry is owned and confessed by the Church; but it is to be considered rather *as their actual investiture with the very power of the office itself, the sacramental seal of their heavenly commission*, and a symbolical assurance from on high that their consecration to the service of Christ is accepted, and that the Holy Ghost will be most certainly with them in the faithful discharge of their official duties." "To them it belongs to baptize, to preach the Word, to administer the holy sacrament of the Lord's Supper. They are appointed to wait upon and serve the Church, which is the spouse of Christ, His body mystical; to *offer up* before Him the prayers and supplications of His people; to feed, to instruct, to watch over and to guide the sheep and lambs of His flock. \* \* They are charged also with the government of the Church, and with the proper use of its discipline in the way of censure and absolution according to that awfully mysterious word in Matth. 16; 18."

Then the candidate for ordination is called upon to avow his acceptance of the Holy Scriptures as the true and proper Word of God, and the ultimate rule and measure of the whole Christian faith; of the substance of the Apostles' Creed, (but set forth in a changed form of expression;) and finally, of the *confessional system* of the Heidelberg Cate-

chism *as being in harmony with the Scriptures and the ancient Christian Creeds.*"

It will scarcely be denied that these views of Ordination far transcend the limits of evangelical theology, and must lead to the hierarchical system.\* Neither do they flow from the very important fundamental idea of Christianity, according to which it is a union of supernatural grace with the natural. On the contrary they simply place the dreaded subjective form of magic (i. e., faith in abrupt operations of the Spirit) against an objective (i. e., one which undervalues the ethical mediation of faith) magic, which is no better, yea the perils of which were abundantly experienced in the period preceding the Reformation. In this, too, *Nevin*, as we have shown, doubtless does great wrong to his opponents; for if "Puritans"—of whom he acknowledges that they make everything of "Christ crucified," and press justification by faith—limit the union of the supernatural and the natural, of the Divine and human, only to the Person of Christ, and so far regard it as a past fact for our earthly history; still they hold a doctrine concerning the Holy Ghost and His work, even though they may not express it in merely Christological terms, or apprehend it as a propagation of a theanthropic life (which neither the Scriptures do.) They hold fast to the inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, to say nothing of the Sacraments, concerning which, unless they fall out with Calvinism, they must also maintain a conjunction of the supernatural with the natural, according to the promise of Christ. And does not the Holy Spirit, according to them, effect a growing union of the Divine and human in *history*? Or does Puritanism think the operations of the Spirit so independent of the coming of Christ, of His Word and Person, that the Spirit exerts His specific Christian activity apart from all connection with Christ, and thus, with historical Christianity in the form which holds for all periods? Judging from the leading works of Presbyterians, f. i., this is not the case.—The charges, therefore, in which Dr. N. indulges in this respect, are as unjust as they are severe, *but do not suffice to conceal his own weakness.* If *Nevin* prefers to describe the operations of grace as the continued life of Christ in the

\* In the face of the above quotations from the New Order itself it is really incomprehensible how the "Reformed Church Messenger" of September 4, 1867, (in a specious article by Dr. Gerhart, B.,) has the boldness to deny that the New Order makes Ordination a Sacrament. The writer affirms that the spiritual office is of Divine character and import in the same sense in which a civil office is so.

Church, His body, whilst his opponents lay emphasis upon the *Holy Spirit*, who creates a new personal consciousness, new personalities, and sets these beside Christ as more definitely distinguished from Him, then it is a serious question whether the Holy Scriptures do not favor the views of N's opponents, and the historical process of the work of Christ for which they contend, more than they justify his own. At least, whilst in his theory the life of believing Christians is rather swallowed up in that of the Person of Christ, the view of his opponents makes believers a world of brothers, among whom Christ is the First-born. In any case, it does not follow, that if they do not agree with *Nevin* they must surrender the perennial objective and historical signification of Christ; the only question would be about the measure of their acknowledgment of it. He wishes to reckon the constitution of the Church as involved in this objective and historical signification as the continuation of the conjunction of the Divine and human; whilst Presbyterians, Puritans, etc., hold simply to the Church as an assembly of believers, in which that process of the union of grace with nature is carried forward. This is not enough for *Nevin*; individual believers seem to him in this view too much as atoms, or as an aggregate. Hence he goes further and asserts an organic union of all Christians in such form that the *bond* of their real manifested fellowship is a theanthropic one, in which the sacramental act of ordination takes a chief place, and so unites the supernatural with the natural, that *the Holy Ghost flows by the laying on of hands from the Apostles through all the generations of those ordained.*

But does that process of the union of the supernatural with the natural, which contains the fundamental Christian idea, involve a union of the Holy Ghost with the laying on of hands—that is with something impersonal, or rather a union of the Holy Ghost with the persons ordained? Even *Nevin* makes the union depend, as the closing words of the form of ordination above quoted show, upon the faith of the receiver, just as in the case of those who partake of the Lord's Supper. When he, therefore, assumes that the conjunction of the Spirit with the imposition of hands, and this of the hands of one already ordained, is to be regarded as absolutely certain in every ordination, so that an organic bond of continuity may never be wanting to the Church, which by establishing and ever renewing the office unites the believing atoms, does he not fall into objective magical notions of the thing? Is then the objective Christ not present to faith? Is not the Holy Ghost a power for the union of the hearts of believers,



and thus of their hands? *By subjecting the operation of the Holy Ghost to the laws of a physical fluid (electricity ? B.) Nevin does not even secure what he wishes, if he does not go further and abandon faith as a condition on the part of the person ordained, and openly adopt a magical efficacy, nay a character indelibilis, for his sacrament of ordination.*

As, however, he has not yet gone so far, but rather requires "faith" of the candidate, so that the divine power of his commission may abide in him, he does not in the least attain to more certainty of the presence of divine grace in the subject by means of a *sacramental* ordination. Even the Romish requirement of the *intention* of the priest leaves the party receiving the sacrament uncertain whether the sacrament was really dispensed; hence there must be still greater uncertainty if *faith* also, that is, something invisible and beyond control, is required on the part of the priest to make the sacrament a sacrament. Of what avail is all the talk about the objectivity of the Church as the abode of salvation and of the life of Christ; of what avail to point to her as the home of the truth and of the theanthropic life of the Redeemer, if we cannot at the same time be confidently assured *where to find this true Church?* Nay, what is needed beside the Word and Sacraments, if, not to run entirely into the magical, we still speak of the presence of the Holy Ghost in persons believing, and require it as essential to a true idea of the Church? But it is a mere sham and self-delusion to claim assurance of the union of the Divine and the human by a reliance upon physical and impersonal conjunctions of both which is arbitrary, not divinely enjoined, and therefore superstitious. There can be no satisfactory assurance of salvation and supernatural grace, unless the Spirit of Christ *unites with our spirit*, and lets it find its true home and life in Him. This Spirit, it is true, does not come to us abruptly, but through the office of the Church, dispensing the Word and Sacraments. But the propagation and power of Christianity does not depend on any power in the Church, but upon the ever present divine power of the Gospel. And when the Spirit of Christ creates new persons who really cling to Him, the Head, those persons will not remain, or become, in a normal process, egoistic atoms, but be inserted in the objective, historical, never-dying, but real, perennially growing, and so not externally separable Body of Christ.

It may, therefore, well be asked: Would it not reward us, if, instead of climbing this inclined plane, we should inquire whether the organic communion, so far as it is possible on earth, *where we walk by faith and not by sight*, may not be more properly derived from the

work of the Holy Spirit upon persons in whom He supernaturally effects a union of the Divine and human? In fact, the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of fellowship as certainly as faith, which He works, is wrought in order to become love. And this bond of brethren is not only more inward than that derived from an ordination sacrament, but far more reliably efficient. For all believers in whom the Spirit of love dwells are drawn to that communion, which is wisely governed by its own inner laws. But on *Nevin's* theory, not even all those for whom that conjunction of the Spirit with the imposition of hands is assumed, are benefitted by it, but only such as believe and continue in the faith. In the external limits of the Church this fellowship of wisdom and love is broken by the large number of mere nominal believers who still cannot be outwardly excluded. But is not the theanthropic chain of *Nevin's* ordination theory also broken? At least, if any weight is attached to faith and fidelity, we cannot see how there can be assurance of unbroken apostolic succession, unless all who are ordained truly believe and receive the Holy Ghost, which even *Nevin* will hardly affirm. And yet all ordained persons, and only they are allowed power to ordain! Hence, unless we adopt Romish tenets, we must be content to hold that the organic communion which flows from Christ cannot be dependant upon the outward rite of a sacramental ordination, and does not first receive from that its reality and historical character. Rather is it an object of faith; we must distinguish the visible from the invisible Church, the outward from the inward, and the common marks (*notæ*) of both are only the Word, Baptism and the Lord's Supper, which serve as the sufficient supports of organizations which are necessary on earth, but may be freely constituted in different forms at different times. The Word of God requires preaching and the administration of the Sacraments in accordance with a divine or dogmatic necessity. But how the details of this duty of the Church and the formal authorization of this perpetual function are to be arranged, is not divinely prescribed, but left to be determined in the most satisfactory way from time to time, by the wisdom of the Church. *It is arbitrary, therefore, for Nevin to heap all churchly powers upon the ministerial office, and thus rob the laity of their proper rights in a way which sets every minister higher than the Romish Church sets her bishops.* Such an actual depreciation of the general priesthood of believers would have been impossible, had not Dr. N., unconsciously, forced the Reformation position, with its inward appropriation of the Gospel truth of the sinner's justification, back to ante-Reformation ground.

The form for *Confirmation* describes (p. 203, etc.) the transaction as the completion of Baptism, just as the Romish Church does at the expense of Baptism, as though the apostles had "confirmed by laying on of hands" all the adults whom they baptized.

Our criticism of the Ordination theory will apply to the sense which Nevin gives to *his form for confession and absolution*. (Vind. p. 83.) The literal form itself is unexceptionable, but he seems to wish it (p. 84,) to be so understood that forgiveness of sin is bound to the outward organization and forms of the Church. *Then it can hardly be denied that in this cardinal point he cuts off individual Christians from direct communion with God by introducing a new priesthood.*

The *form of Baptism* agrees essentially with the Heidelberg Catechism—but two things deserve notice. According to the Palatinate Liturgy the requirement of antecedent or subsequent penitent faith, in opposition to a magical efficacy, should not have been omitted. Further, there is something unequal in Nevin's expressing himself in the strongest terms upon the guilt and damnable-ness of original sin, as the ground for the necessity of infant Baptism, whilst the forgiveness of sin holds no proper place as a turning point in the doctrine of justification. But in the form for the *Lord's Supper*, which otherwise contains much that is beautiful, the idea of a sacrifice presented by the communicants, stands forth in a manner which is forced, and which must be offensive to an evangelical ear. It is not according to Calvin, as N. supposes, but to the Greek Church, that God is implored to send down upon the elements the powerful benediction of His Holy Spirit, that they may be set apart from a common to a sacred and mystical use, and exhibit and represent with true effect the Body and Blood of His Son Jesus Christ, so that in the use of them we may be made, through the power of the Holy Ghost, to partake really and truly of His blessed life, whereby only we can be saved from death and raised to immortality at the last day. (Nothing is said of the death of Christ.) On p. 176 of the new Liturgy, the chief point is: "Cleanse our minds, we beseech Thee, by the inspiration of Thy Holy Spirit, that we, Thy redeemed people, drawing near unto Thee in these holy mysteries, with a true heart and undefiled conscience, in full assurance of faith, may offer unto Thee *an acceptable sacrifice* in righteousness," and (on p. 181) it is required that this grace shall be appropriated, and that *the memorial of the blessed sacrifice of His Son be offered unto God.*

All this shows that the Revised Liturgy contains many things which, from the standpoint of the evangelical Church, must be pronounced

objectionable and erroneous. Other things, even though they may admit of an evangelical sense, are expressed in strange terms, and should have been avoided to prevent natural offence. This is doubly necessary when the non-evangelical sense is the more obvious one, and seeks to prop itself upon an entire theological system.

This leads us to notice S. Miller's "Treatise on Mercersburg Theology, or Mercersburg and Modern Theology compared;" for which, indeed, Dr. N. is not to be held wholly responsible, as it carries some things to extremes, but the fundamental ideas of which are closely allied to his. It presents a fixed and defined position for what is termed "Mercersburg Theology," in contrast with other theological systems, and is a most significant symptom of the movement of the defender of the "Revised Liturgy," and of the Churchly and Theological position which he occupies.

By the vague title: "*Modern theology*," is meant that the theology opposed to him, in all its various phases, in origin and conception, is modern, and in no true sympathy with the faith and teachings of the ancient Church, whilst it departs from the standpoint of the Church of the Reformation. Mercersburg theology, on the contrary, aims at a deeper apprehension, and a defence of the faith and doctrines of the ancient Church and the Reformation. "Protestant theology," however, was not exempt from the same liability of failing (see book p. 12, 13) to apprehend fully the system of doctrines which it exhumed out of the accumulated errors of past ages, or to retain it pure, but was subjected, especially in its modern acceptance, to the most unmerciful criticism of German rationalism and infidelity, which induced a theological struggle such as the world had never witnessed before. It may well be called the life-struggle of theology for the entire Church, fought on the old battle-field of the sixteenth century, which resulted for a second time in a triumphant vindication of the truth; but apprehended in a profounder sense than ever before. *German evangelical theology*, or theology as thus reproduced by the ablest and profoundest defenders of Christianity the Church has ever produced, is Protestant still, over against the errors of Rome; but Catholic at the same time, as embracing the whole truth as underlying the faith of the Church in all ages; and evangelical, as doing full justice to the positive results of the Reformation. In Germany, it is best known by what is called evangelical theology, being the product of the united evangelical Church of that country. In this country, it is best known as "Mercersburg theology," and stands opposed to the modern Puritan and prevailing

English and American theology. The philosophy which underlies it is taught in Franklin and Marshall College, at Lancaster.

Before comparing the two systems, he affirms that they differ widely (p. 44) throughout, start from opposite modes, and that it is impossible to accept both; neither can one part of the Mercersburg system be accepted whilst another is rejected.

After a brief introduction, the contrast starts with *Christology*, then passes to the doctrines of the *atonement, justification, regeneration, the sacraments, the ministry, the rule of faith, the Scriptures*, then to subjective faith and its relation to evidences, and finally to *Cultus*, (the pulpit, the altar, the keys, confirmation.)

Modern theology, is charged by Miller, with being based on the empiricism of Locke, who traced all our ideas to sensation and reflection, and denied innate ideas.\* Mercersburg theology, convinced that the system of Locke leads to materialism and infidelity, starts with *God-consciousness*. The former allows the spirit to be reached only from without, as through the Scriptures, to be written upon as a tablet, and hence limits itself to external proofs. The latter accepts of self-evident truths, founded in man's self-consciousness, and which need not be established by proofs from other sources. The consciousness of God has long possessed our nature, and needs no proof; so likewise the consciousness of sin, and that which flows from both these, the consciousness of our need of redemption. From these positions he immediately (pp. 10-46,) passes to Christology.—How little rationalistic that theology is which Miller calls "Modern," is manifest from the remark that it makes the atonement or death of Christ its central idea, whilst Mercersburg theology takes His Person or incarnation.—Everything turns for it upon what He is, not what He did.† Christ, for it, is not a mere individual, but the incorporation of the entire life of humanity, the second Adam, or covenant head of the race, and this first secures to His obedience and death their atoning merit. But as He is not merely an individual, is He neither all individuals in a numerical sense. His passion and death are the passion and death of humanity as a

\* But how many Presbyterians, Congregationalists and others, accept eternal truths, ethical and mathematical, as immanent in the reason! It is of course true, and is found even in Bacon's time, that pressing too far the dogma of the natural blindness of the reason, led to a pure external empiricism and sensationalism.

† When the Person and work of Christ are thus separated, we may confidently conclude that there is a defect in the ethical apprehension of Christ as God-man.

whole, which is something deeper, broader and more universal than any number of believers. Were He only *one* individual among many, His atonement could not be general, nor even fulfilled in a limited sense; the merits of His death would avail only for Himself.\*

This central idea must rule all doctrines. He took humanity upon Himself and became the universal man, who stands related to the race redeemed in Him in the way as the first Adam did to the race which fell in him. The humanity of the one is as comprehensive and universal as the humanity of the other. In this sense He became man, so that the assumption of our nature in sinless perfection, is itself the redemption of humanity.† Humanity is already redeemed in Him as the source of a new race which spring from Him. In Him we have redemption, and by becoming one with Him all things are ours. The Divine and human nature are not only united in one Person, but in one life—the theanthropic life of the God-man; if this is communicated to us, we become partakers of His divine as well as human nature. But it is of chief importance that we partake of His *humanity*—for only through it can we truly have part in His divine nature, or in the merits of His passion and death.

Miller's meaning is explained by what he says of *imputation, atonement, justification, and regeneration*. "Modern theology," which regards Christ only as an individual, makes the imputation of his merits to believers but an empty abstraction, in which they have no participation in fact.

Mercersburg theology teaches that the sin of our first parents is imputed to their posterity because they are involved in it; so the righteousness of Christ is imputed to believers because they partake of it in fact by virtue of their union with Him.‡ He could not even have made atonement upon abstract modern conceptions of a vicarious satisfaction. God ever judges according to truth and justice. How then could the truth and justice of God hold Christ who was sinlessly holy, responsible for the sins of the human race? Not by setting them sim-

\* That Christ was an individual should not be denied; for this is essential to the truth of His humanity. But He is "the" individual who was designed and qualified by the Godhead in Him, purely to exhibit the idea of humanity, and thus to possess a sole, universal significance and power.

† This again has more of a physical than ethical sound.

‡ But the opponents of Nevin also teach that the posterity of Adam are involved in his sin. Only they seek the reason for this, and evidence of its justice, in the theories of Adam's federal headship, etc.

ply over to His account, but only because Christ, by assuming our nature, also assumed our guilt.\* The assumption of the same human nature that had sinned, on the part of a sinless Christ, did not absolve that nature from the guilt and responsibility of sin, but gave justice the right to hold Him answerable for the guilt of that nature; for in assuming it, though freely, He necessarily assumed all its debts and liabilities, and, therefore, placed Himself under the necessity of rendering satisfaction for sin, as a "man who becomes proprietor of an estate covered with judgments, for the liabilities of its former owner, becomes responsible for these debts." Such imputation of our guilt is in full harmony with reason, justice and truth.

In like manner with regard to the imputation of Christ's righteousness. It can become possible only by being real, i. e., by our partaking through union with Him, of the same human nature which knew no sin, and yet made satisfaction for sin.† "Modern theology," he says, "maintains a mere outward imputation to believers; Catholic (Romish) theology, that we become righteous by the regenerating and sanctifying influence of the Spirit; Puseyism, that justification is the making us righteous by the communication of the divine life of Christ, which, being divine and holy, makes us righteous. According to Mercersburg theology, the Protestant doctrine of imputation is substantially correct, that we are accounted righteous for the sake of the merits and righteousness of Christ, but it apprehends the doctrine more profoundly by adding that the divine act of imputation in the case is conditioned by our actual participation in these merits, by virtue of our union with Christ.‡ It is not simply a declaratory, but a creative act at the same

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\* More correctly : was placed under the law, which as the law of love constrained Him to become a curse for us.

† The non-recovering of sin, and granting grace for Christ's sake, must, of course, not be contrary to truth, but in accordance with it. But this is really the case. For grace is not a denial of guilt, but an assertion of its pardon. But pardon, again, is granted on the ground of a reality, and is not against truth. For it is pardon for Christ's sake, who is just and the surety for the honor and claim of divine justice, to which He offers Himself as an atonement. And Christ is our suppliant intercessor with the Father, so that the Father may forgive us. But that we first obtain justification by *participating in the human nature of Christ*, is a manufactured theory which cannot support itself by the Holy Scriptures.

‡ But how can God let us be assured, before we believe that He has pardoned our sins for Christ's sake? And is this union with Christ after all anything different from that participation in His holy and divine life which the author calls Puseyistic?

time, which brings us into possession of Christ's merits, which are imputed to us." "The merits of Christ are inseparable from His divine-human Person or life, and go together in the simultaneous act of justification and regeneration, which do not follow each other in the order of time."\*

"Regeneration, according to Modern theology, is a change of heart inwrought by the Holy Ghost. According to Mercersburg theology, the outward and inward change is but the result of regeneration, which is a new birth. In the former a filthy garment is changed into a clear one; much is taken away from our old nature, but nothing new is added; the old Adam is only "washed, cleaned, and dressed up like a veritable-looking Christian."† In the latter, we have a new creature in Christ Jesus by the communication of the life of Christ by the Holy Spirit. This is the beginning of a process through which Christ is formed in us, and the end of which is our entire sanctification by the assimilating and transforming power of the life of Christ, "whose deepest ground enters in the act of regeneration into the deepest ground of our life, where they become one, the latter being raised up into the order and quality of the former." Subsequently he compares fallen man to a broken vessel, which can be put together again and mended, according to Modern theology, whilst in reality a new creation is required. The divine nature was lost in the fall of the race, and can be restored only by a new creation. Not merely a human race is to be raised above the several kingdoms of nature, but a kingdom of a divine-human life, established by Christ after the fall, since believing humanity becomes His body through participation in His humanity.

The Body or humanity of Christ, says Miller further, occupies an important place in Mercersburg theology. Luther and Calvin held firmly that we truly partake of the body of Christ. But a purely corporeal and material body cannot be present wherever the divinity is (this seems to be aimed at Luther); and Calvin's union with Christ by our elevation through faith to heaven, is unsatisfactory, since it is

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\* That in the *subjective process*, when faith is present, the *possession* of justification and regeneration are simultaneous, is doubtless the common evangelical belief. But if our union with Christ, and not merely His union with us, is made *objectively*, (i. e., for the divine act of justification) the antecedent condition, it is simply re-affirming that our participation in the life of Christ, (hence essentially, sanctification,) is the prior condition of justification.

† This again is unjust. Calvinistic theology holds to positive fruits of the Spirit, vivification as well as mortification, thankfulness, love, etc., etc.

only with spiritual things that we can be united by such elevation. Melancthon and the Heidelberg Catechism also maintain a real union with the body of Christ without explaining the mode. On the contrary, Modern theology gave up the doctrine on rationalistic grounds, whilst Mercersburg theology adheres to it as essential to the whole system of Christian doctrine. It is led to do this by the anthropological conception, that whilst "the *accidental* parts of the human body are material and subject to the laws of matter, the *essential* part is spiritual and not subject to these laws. We do not partake, for example, of the material substance of Adam's body, which has been mouldering in the grave for six thousand years; and yet all his children, red, white and black, are bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh." Thus do believers partake of the body of Christ, the second Adam, and by virtue of their new birth, are as really bone of His bone, and flesh of His flesh, as they belong by\* their natural birth to the first Adam.

This life-communication, Miller proceeds, takes place, ordinarily, through Baptism, as the divinely appointed means; it is nourished, however, by the Bread of life communicated to us in the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ. "Modern theology," on the contrary, is unsacramental; hence, also, unorganic, individualistic. It regards the Church as only a collection and organization of individual Christians, "who adopt such Church policy as to them may seem promotive of the general interests of Christianity; but no one feels bound by conscience to abide by the confederation thus formed. Each one is at liberty to leave it and join another, or form a new one better suited to his fancy, without violating any principle except that, perhaps, of propriety and expediency." "Full license is thus given to the sect-spirit, and is justified in the premises in breaking up the Church into as many pieces as it pleases. Hence there is no Church authority that has a right to interfere in maintaining her integrity by restraining the conscience of men. No Church authority is recognized and respected except such as each individual chooses to invest the Church with, and when he takes that back, the Church has no longer jurisdiction over him.

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\* Doubtless this is a profound and important idea. But Miller speaks as though the Holy Ghost, who is mediated by the historical manifestation of Christ, did not possess the power of uniting the Divine and the human, which is nevertheless the essential matter; as though He were no real Principle proceeding from Christ.

"The idea of the Church is thus reduced to a perfect level with any other voluntary human organization. There is nothing in it that binds Christians together organically."\*

Mercersburg theology, however, in Miller's opinion, apprehends Christianity as a life, not as a mere idea or doctrine; but all life is organic, hence the Christian life is attained only by an organic† process; so we have the idea of the Church as an organism starting in the Person of Christ as its fountain and developing itself as its mystical body. Life can reproduce and multiply itself only by a process.‡ Fruits are not made, but grow. Individual life, the family, the State, are organisms; so too the Church. And outside of this organism of the Church, which is the bearer of the life of Christ, there can be no Christians, no Christianity; for outside of it there is no Saviour, no life, no salvation for a lost world. The Church is the continuation of the mystery of the incarnation, for the continuation of the life of Christ is as real as the life of the race is the continuation of that of the first Adam. But, like the mystery of the incarnation, it transcends all the laws of mere nature, and becomes an object of faith. On the contrary, "Modern theology" does not regard the Church as an object of faith, and connects no mystery with her. She is only a voluntary union of Christians, outwardly brought together, without a bond of organic life.

But, he seems to ask, did not the Reformation start with individuals? No, it was rather the result of the best life of the Catholic Church, which thus reached its culmination.|| "Modern theology" knows nothing of such an organic connection with the past history and life of the Church. It views the Reformation not as the result of a life-

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\* This is certainly a point which is justly turned against the sect-system by German, especially Lutheran theology. *But the remedy proposed, "Church authority," is even more dangerous than the disease.* To strengthen unity, it is not necessary to grasp at dogmatic errors; it suffices, yea the only help is, to use the means of grace, the ethical side in the idea of the Church, the duty of love, faithfulness, patience, humility, these will best prevail against loose sectarianism.

† The term "organic" is designed to mark the physical character of the theory and take the place of ethical.

‡ Love kindles love (1 John, 4; 10,) not by an organic but ethical process, but of course not a merely ethicistic one.

|| But the Reformation was nevertheless an open rupture with the "Churchly organization" of that and the preceding age. So that all the talk about an "organic process" seems of no avail.

process or historical development, but as merely the work of individual men, who finding the Church not to their idea, left it as the synagogue of Satan, and reconstructed a new Scriptural one, much in the style of modern sects. True, "Modern theology" thinks that Mercersburg doctrines lead to Rome. But there is no danger of this; "organic development never goes backward; only individuals not comprehended in the organic process go backwards."\* The Church, as an organism, can never retrograde, but only go forward. But "Modern theology" whose logical consequences lead to infidelity, constrains earnest minds, who accept it as the true exposition of Protestantism, to seek refuge in Rome.

After laying down this general basis, Miller proceeds in chapter four to consider *the office of the ministry*, (nothing is said of elders.) As the Church has to do with divine and supernatural facts, he says, it must have a ministry suited to this character. He casts up to "Modern theology," that its ministry "*has no power to bind the conscience of men in matters of faith and practice.*" It knows of no organs through which Christ speaks,† "whose words and official acts are to be accepted in good faith, as being in accordance with His instructions." They must rather allow men to doubt what they say, until they prove by documentary or other evidences, that they are not misrepresenting the truth, of which the hearers are to be the judges.‡

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\* Are there then no spurious births in the sphere of the organic?

† But modern theology possesses the Holy Scriptures, and the means of grace are never so unfruitful that both ministers and laymen may not, through them, be made the organs (instruments) of God by the Holy Ghost, though, of course, without being clothed with divine authority. *This adheres to the Holy Scriptures alone.*

‡ To be logically consistent, therefore, Mercersburg theology must claim infallibility for every minister, whilst the Romish Church allows this only to the Church as a whole. What Miller further says of the unnaturalness of substituting evidences and common sense for the fresh and stirring testimony of living witnesses for Christ, is not the method of modern theology, but of antiquated intellectualistic supernaturalism. But it would be a poor exchange to run into Romanism to get rid of it. This were a putting to sleep again the personal investigation and inquiry after salvation and truth aroused in the Reformation, and such an unnatural course can certainly not produce full-grown, vigorous Christians, but only spiritual cripples, who hang upon the authority of others without personal conviction or assurance. But should it be admitted that the truth, on whatever ground it may be accepted, possesses the power to authenticate itself to the spirit (which Miller accepts,) then the spiritual equality of the believing layman with the believing minister, is yielded; nay, the former has the right and power to try and judge the teachings of the, possibly, unbelieving minister. What becomes, then, of

According to Mercersburg theology, as developed by Miller, the office of the ministry is a continuation of the prophetic, priestly, and kingly office of Christ. "If He be present in His Church as His mystical body, He is not only present in His divine and human nature, but also in His threefold office, with its divine and supernatural functions; that office, with its functions, is reproduced in the office of the ministry, which He instituted and *solemnly invested, with the promise to be identified with it to the end of time.*"\* When the Apostles preached men were expected to believe, not on the ground of any, outward evidence, but on the demonstration of the divine and supernatural presence by which their teachings were inspired. The divine and supernatural formed the basis on which their teachings were accepted by faith; "and this continues in the Church as the ever-abiding, immovable basis on which men now, as in the past and future, accept by faith the teachings of the Gospel, the Bible, as the Word of God, included. The Church is thus the pillar and ground of the truth. In the light of *that faith which we receive from the Church* do the internal evidences of the Sacred Scriptures carry with them their legitimate force in confirming and establishing their own authenticity and inspiration." In the light of this faith, only, do we understand the Scriptures, which are thus neither the source nor means of faith, but "a God-given safe-guard" of that Church-faith which is independent of it. Of all this "Modern theology" knows nothing; it does not need the universal faith of the Church as a starting-point; its private judgment can get along without it. It gets its faith fresh from the Bible, which, for it, is superior to any musty creeds of the Church, which only hamper the free exercise of a more enlightened judgment.†

Mercersburg theology, on the contrary, Miller proceeds, confesses freely that it stands in full sympathy with the universal faith of the

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the pretended power of the office, i. e., of the office-bearers, ministers, as such, "to bind the conscience?"

\* They only can speak thus for whom the specific significance of the office of Christ for atonement, etc., has been lost in the ministry of the Church.

† Certainly true faith in the authority of the Scriptures as the norm (rule) of faith is preceded by another faith, faith in Christ, the experience of His power to save. But Miller has not shown that this prior faith must be faith in the authority of the Church and its Creeds. The main matter is to present the Gospel in its plain simplicity to those susceptible of it, whether in the form of the Scriptures or of preaching based on the Scriptures, by which the mind is drawn, captivated, moved to faith, and to a willingness to make personal experience of all. Did Paul the Apostle first require sub-

Church, as expressed in the Creed. "Here is something to start upon, something that challenges our acceptance *on the ground that it has been admitted by the universal Church, in all ages.*" This is a bond of union which has outlived all dire divisions; a stupendous fact which challenges faith, that what has under such circumstances and in all ages been universally held as true, must be true indeed. It is only equalled by the same unanimity with which the Bible has been accepted as the Word of God. "They cannot, therefore, be separated, but *stand or fall together.* As long as the Creed is accepted as an expression of our undoubted Christian faith, the Bible will be accepted as the undoubted Word of God, and as long as the Bible is thus revered will the Creed be revered as the expression of our undoubted Christian faith." True, this expression and the Bible are not cöordinate; but if we wish to draw our faith fresh from the Bible, (separated from the Creed,) we shall have as many different kinds of faith as there are different apprehensions of its contents. The Bible is no longer the infallible rule of an undoubted and universally accepted faith.

Thus in Miller's case the old experience repeats itself, that the authority of the Church and her Creeds can be magnified beyond what our evangelical doctrine allows, only by imputing *obscurity* to the Scriptures. And yet he says that Mercersburg theology does not rest in mere faith in authority. It acknowledges the power of the *object* of faith to authenticate itself to the spirit by its purely objective manifestation; but yet without laying special stress on the saving significance of the Gospel, on the experience of pardon in penitent faith, or on anything personal. Miller, like Nevin, makes all depend on receiving the *life* of Christ. All men are naturally capable of apprehending the evidence of Christianity. "According to Mercersburg theology, there is in the constitution of man's higher and spiritual nature, an innate power of apprehending spiritual and divine things, which, when excited by the lively preaching of the Gospel, or by being brought into immediate and proper relation to divine and spiritual realities, constitute faith. By the exercise of this power he enters into communion with the invisible and spiritual world, into the heart and mind of God

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mission to an external authority, faith in the O. T. Scriptures, [because handed down by the Church, B.,] or in the Church, or in his own divine authority, or did he testify of Christ from an overflowing heart, and then seek to lead on those thus brought to believe? Faith in the Apostles' Creed may be merely historical faith, which is not yet a saving faith.

Himself, and draws from thence new spiritual life for his own being.' The consciousness that God is the Father of men, and that lost Paradise is their proper home, can never be totally lost.

This is still more fully explained by M. in chapter six, (pp. 79-95) "on the Nature of Evidences." "According to Modern theology, faith is the assent of the mind to the truth on the conviction produced by the force or authority of evidences." This is, substantially, Romish, though the two systems differ as to the kind of evidence or authority which is accepted as satisfactory. In both cases faith is assent to truth established by recognized authority. According to Mercersburg faith is the apprehension of a self-evident truth that requires no proof beyond itself. Facts are either transient or continuous. Of the former but few, in any given case, can testify. The latter can be proven by universal testimony—as that the sun shines. Christianity is a continuous, permanent fact, like the sun, and its truth can be established on the authority of the most unquestionable evidences; but its truth does not depend on any kind or amount of mere evidences; it is open to the immediate apprehension of all who come into immediate relation to it, and bring with them the power of apprehending it—of faith—to which it is self-evident on its bare presentation. This presentation is made by the preaching of the Gospel. All the authority, testimony and argument in the world do not give that knowledge of the fact that the sun shines, which a single glance at it affords. So it is by immediate relation to the truth that full certainty of the truth is produced. The glorious truth of the Gospel can only be known, and be of any real benefit to man when apprehended as self-evident to faith. The light of the Gospel would be no lamp to our feet, without absolute certainty of its truth. From our own knowledge of this truth must we bear witness that Christianity is the true religion. Christianity itself demands of us that we accept it; but such a demand would be neither just nor reasonable if the absolute certainty of its truth and reliability could not be gained. We must not merely believe on the word of others, but hear and know for ourselves that "Christianity, though a continuous fact, is self-evident, but only to those who apprehend it by faith."\*

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\* The faith thus described, is, however, unhappily, not faith in personal salvation in Christ, but only in objective Christianity. The certainty of this, consequently, rests not in an experienced certainty of salvation, but on the blindly accepted authority of the Church, and is promised only as a reward for such a blind, arbitrary act. The

Even in the natural world, he continues, we obtain knowledge of self-evident facts only by faith, and may not reject them because we cannot arrive at absolute certainty of them by the mere process of reason. That anything is susceptible of becoming absolutely certain to us, depends upon whether it is susceptible of becoming self-evident. Christianity is so. It claims to be an object of faith, susceptible of becoming self-evident, and, so, absolutely certain. To test this claim fairly, we are bound in all honesty to place ourselves into such immediate relation to it, by which it may, if true, become thus self-evident to faith. Millions upon millions have done this, and all with *one accord* testify to its truth—while those who reject Christianity have never done this.

The Church process is as follows: By Baptism we are placed in the covenant and a gracious relation to God; then through the hearing of the Word (Catechization), the consciousness of this relation is awakened—all is finally confirmed and ratified by the laying on of hands (Confirmation,) *by which Baptism is complemented*, the baptized are solemnly introduced into full communion with the Church, and prepared for the Table of the Lord; the purpose of all being to awaken and strengthen in them a full assurance of faith, or conscious union and communion with God in Jesus Christ. Confirmation, to which "Modern theology" can ascribe no virtue, because none can be proven to the understanding, is for M's. theology an operation of the kingly office of Christ, with which the minister is clothed, so that he may speak and act with divine authority, in reproving sinners, and in comforting believers.

At this point Miller remembers that he has not dealt quite justly with his opponents, in speaking of their view of faith as being a mere conviction of the understanding. Hence he is led to speak, but only in a supplementary way, (p. 106,) of "the witness of the Spirit," which, according to "Modern theology," (*and, he might have added, the Reformers also,*) supercedes everything else, in giving to us the full assurance of faith attainable in this life. But, he says, "Modern theology" regards this testimony as something superadded to faith, by which we are divinely assured of our state of grace, which assumes that faith does not in itself carry with it that divine assurance, which of course it does not if faith is mere belief. But Mercersburg the-

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author is led into this error because he disregards the ethical side in the process of faith, the eye of conscience which discerns its personal sin as well as the righteousness of Christ.

ology insists that such assurance belongs to faith itself.\* What "Modern theology" calls the witness of the Spirit, is something purely subjective, either of an intellectual or emotional nature.† For if it is denied that we have a spiritual nature, if by our spirit nothing more is meant than our intellectual or emotional nature, it is absurd to speak of the witness of the Spirit of God to our spirits. What is called the witness of the Spirit is mostly nothing but the natural reaction of human nature from a state of painful distress. According to Mercersburg theology faith is itself the evidence or authentication of things not seen, and therefore carries within itself that divine assurance. The Spirit of God speaks in the Gospel of His Son, in His sacred ordinances, and in the official acts of His ministers, immediately to our spirits, and the apprehension of what God's Spirit witnesses and reveals to our spirit is faith. "The witness of the Spirit, therefore, is not superadded to faith, but is the revelation of the Spirit of the truth to faith; *not simply in reference to our being in a state of grace, or our own immediate relation to God*, but, also, in reference to the whole truth of the Gospel."‡ How the personal knowledge of the truth of Christianity is obtained, is not explained; but objective certainty, i. e., truth, seems to be simply substituted for subjective certainty. The old evangelical view, that we attain to assurance in Christ by personal reconciliation with God and its experience, is shunned as subjectivism, whilst it is assumed that we have in our not wholly lost spiritual nature an organ for perceiving the self-evidence of spiritual and Christian facts as soon as they are presented to us, without passing through the subjective ethical process of conviction of sin and repentance, just as the sun makes itself self-evident to a beholder. If (p. 98) the God-consciousness of sin, guilt, need of salvation, desire for reunion with

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\* It does this, it is an important defect. Faith as the act of accepting grace, or of apprehending Christ, is one thing; it is another thing, as the experience of the power of Christianity which works effectually in those who have surrendered themselves to it by faith.

† It is just the reverse of this; if faith has assurance as the act of apprehending already, it cannot derive that assurance from the religious operation of the object so received, but only out of its own subjectivity.

‡ Here we see the intellectualistic character of the system advocated by Miller, even though in mystical form. For scarcely any notice is taken of the *experience of salvation*, without which, however, we cannot become conscious of the essence of Christianity; whilst, reversely, the personal consciousness of redemption by Christ involves, at the same time, a consciousness of the Redeemer, and His divine power.



God, must know all this for itself, and thereby have the eye for spiritual things opened, to see that satisfaction for these wants is provided in the Gospel, the whole process is still set forth in a one-sided objective and intellectualistic form, so long as no weight is laid for the certainty of Christianity, upon a personal satisfaction of our spiritual wants. Personal and even absolute certainty of Christianity is, after all, impossible through a mere objective contemplation of faith, but is first wrought by the objective working in upon us with its redeeming, its peace-and-joy-imparting power. The act of faith which lays hold of the object (that which claims faith,) must ever be distinguished from the power of the object which in being laid hold of, attests itself to be divine.

It is hardly worth while to notice the views of this writer concerning the Trinity which he sees revealed in three periods of the world. He also thinks the Christian Confessions are trinitarian in their structure. The world and humanity present a parallel in this way: The manifestation of God the Father, falls in the period of the world's childhood and youth, in which the parental and filial relation between God and the race becomes manifest. The manifestation of God the Son falls in the central period of the world's history, at the point at which its life had reached its ripened natural manhood; and the Son established the fraternal relation between Himself and the race. The third period is that of the manifestation of the Holy Spirit, by which the new race is brought into living union or marriage relation to God. All this must be experienced in our individual life. Our love to God must not only be filial, but fraternal also in its relation to Christ, yea, in its higher and purer joy rise to that relation whose type is marriage.

As Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are distinct, and yet the one only true and eternal God, so, he says, the three great branches of the Christian Church, the Catholic,\* (Romish,) Lutheran and Reformed, though distinct in character, constitute the one true Church of God on earth. "Each is a truly legitimate and historical product of the organic life of Christianity; and the distinctive types of Christianity which they present, bear the impress of that distinction which has its ultimate and fundamental ground in the Trinity. The legalistic type of Catholic (Romish) Christianity, has its prototype in the legalism of the Old Testament Church under the dispensation of the Father: the

[\* Alas! for the poor Greek Church, to say nothing of Puritans and Baptists!—B.]

freer evangelical type of Lutheran Christianity finds its prototype in the faith and love of the disciples of Christ, whilst He was objectively with them on earth, leaning on and trusting in, as it does, the objective Christ, Christ on the cross, Christ in the Word, and Christ in the Sacraments; whilst the Reformed type finds its prototype in the more spiritual nature of early Christianity, making proper account of the operations and witness of the Spirit, or the subjective Christ, Christ within us. Hence there is a true and profound meaning in calling the one the Church of the Father, the other the Church of the Son, and the other the Church of the Holy Ghost; and these three are one. *This, too, is reckoned among the self-evident facts.* (p. 122.) It reveals the mission of the Church of the future. They must only realize their unity as an equally important and necessarily historical process; and the guarantee for that future unity is precisely the great underlying fact of the presence of God in her as a Triune Being, and that her trinitarian life will ultimately work out and complete itself in a higher unity and perfection, by a regular process of historical development.

Having thus set forth in full, what Miller calls Mercersburg theology, some critical remarks may be allowed. It is a great defect in his criticism of "Modern theology," not to say precisely what theologians are meant. So far as we know the designation does not hold. The description does not apply to Presbyterians, Calvinists, or Congregationalists in general, and not to Dr. Bomberger. There may be some who resemble the portrait, as much of the old supernaturalism may still exist, but it must be pronounced dogmatically inaccurate and unjust, when the very system which is called rationalistic, subjectivistic, unhistorical, unchurchly, is, on the other hand, admitted by the Mercersburgers, to maintain the doctrines of man's need of redemption, of the Trinity and the Incarnation, of the atonement by Christ, justification by faith, the inspiration and normative authority of the Holy Scriptures, as the source of all Christian truth, the inward witness of the Holy Spirit of a state of grace, the Church visible and invisible, and the Sacraments, (though the last perhaps more in a Zwinglian than Calvinistic form.)—In view of all this the Reformation character of this theology may seem so manifest that the term "Modern theology," which sounds like neology, hardly fits. On the contrary, "Mercersburg theology" is, in fact, a neology on Reformation ground, by the manner in which it reaches back to the ante-Reformation Church. With its idea of tradition, office, sacraments, an objective and visible Church, it is an attempt at restoring pre-Reformation views, and of

introducing them into our times. The decisive question then is: do these views agree with the character of the Reformed Church, or are they of such a nature and so consistent with themselves that they can furnish a cure for the sect-system? We believe, according to the sketch given above, that this theology is, in many important points, partly a darkening, partly a principal retraction of Reformation doctrines, and that, through its inner inconsistencies, it must tend practically to multiply American sects, to split the German Reformed Church there, and to promote a reactionary movement like the estrangement of the English (Episcopal) Church, from the Reformation, and like that which has begun in Germany also.

It once more identifies the Church on earth with the Body of Christ, as a continuation of the incarnation and three-fold office of Christ, and this latter so that it is the *clergy especially and most certainly*, through whose office, by the laying on of hands, that continuation of the incarnation and three-fold office of Christ is effected. They are the proper organs for the efficiency of the means of grace, and Episcopal sacerdotalism is only so far rejected that in this theology *every* minister occupies a hierarchical episcopal position. Whether such an apostolic succession is Scriptural is but little thought of; as little, whether the ancient Church had an office invested with such Mercersburg powers. But the investiture of the ministry with such powers does not even flow from the doctrine of a perennial incarnation, or of the identification of the Church with Christ. Rather does it more directly lead to the view that all who are baptized possess such powers as members of the Body of Christ; which, of course, involves a physical apprehension of grace, and an optimistic indifference to sin, wherever infant baptism is practiced.

If, in view of the fact that there are unbaptized believers or hypocrites, the certain continuation of the incarnation and offices of Christ is not recognized in universal Christendom as well as in the ministry, the inquiry returns: are then all ordained persons believers and members of Christ? Is not hypocrisy and unbelief equally possible in the ministry? Where then is the assurance that we are brought, by the laying on of the priest's hands, into contact with the Body of Christ, in which His life pulsates, (not simply with His means of grace.) Even the new Liturgy requires fidelity of the person ordained in distinction from grace, which cannot be maintained without such fidelity. But what can the chief consideration which is to commend such a priesthood, signify, viz., that the person ordained is to speak in God's

name, whilst the hearers must believe his word as a divine message on account of the authority of his office? Or is the ordained minister, a Presbyterian, f. i., even though he may have become a Unitarian, justified in demanding, in God's name, faith in what he preaches? This would lead beyond the Romish doctrine of the authority of the clergy, which refers the sacramental virtue of ordination not to spiritual powers, whether intellectual or moral, but to something impersonal, viz., the power to administer the sacraments in a valid and effectual manner. And what of the necessity for such a hierarchical apparatus? Mercersburg theology, as taught by Miller, says, and here again in a more evangelical way, that Christian truth can, and seeks to, become absolute certainty for man through faith. Why then shall not the minister, whose heart has become fixed in this truth, and who has found it to be divine power and divine truth, after he has been invested with the office by the Church, regard himself as an ambassador of Christ who, with divine confidence, can demand faith in the Gospel as a duty, by virtue of the universally binding truth of his message? Why should he need a *sacramental* ordination for this purpose? The Romish theory is consistent, when, in order to base the authority of the priesthood on something different from the contents of evangelical preaching, it forbids believers seeking a personal assurance of salvation, through justification by faith, in their own experience, when it denies to Christian truth the power and tendency of authenticating itself by the witness of the Spirit to man personally. For then man would no longer be dependent in matters of salvation upon the authority of the Church—it would be gone. But it is only by an inconsistency that the so-called Mercersburg theology can, on the one hand, acknowledge an inner authority of the truth by which it authenticates itself to the spirit, and yet on the other requires the external authority of the priest. More closely viewed, it indeed sets the subjective part of the process, the personal certainty of salvation, far below the certification of objective Christian truth. In a very loose application of the idea of self-evident truth, it ascribes to objective truth the power of absolutely authenticating itself to the mind which contemplates it. But our contemplation of objective Christian truth can lead to only an objective intellectualistic effect, seeing that *our name* is not embraced in that truth; and the conjunction of the objective with our own self-consciousness, is the chief thing on which all else depends. This conjunction is first secured when the Redeemer is embraced as our Redeemer, when the objective manifests its personal bearing, and we are

thus brought, in the consciousness of our redemption through Christ, to know at once the Redeemer and the divine efficacy of His power to save. In other words, if that objective contemplation by faith does not pass through a personal experience of the pardon of sin and so attain to *justifying faith*, it is only a powerless reflection of the image of Christian truths which live in the Church and irradiate our youth, but is nothing more than, possibly pious, faith in outward authority. This exposes the deeper defect of Mercersburg theology. It does not determine *Christ for us*, i. e., Christ as distinct from us in His objectivity, by which He is savingly related to our individual persons, and at the same time makes us independent of the Church as a priestly power as regards our reconciliation with God. For that theology, Christ has to a certain extent, been absorbed into the Church. He exists yet only as the soul of her historical organism. He and His Spirit have no longer a self-subsistent activity and position outside of the Church; but the Church, in her official organization, (ministry or priesthood,) is made the exclusive medium of His activity, as though the fullness of His life had been absolutely passed over into her.

But let this suffice. For the rest, I hail with pleasure the manifold relationship of this transatlantic theology with some of the fundamental ideas of later German science, which it advocates with ardor and energy. But if I am not deceived, it stands in peril of wasting its life-powers in abnormal schemes and vain attempts to rejuvenate antiquity, (repristinations.) May the preceding criticisms contribute somewhat towards inducing such a revision of doctrinal principles involved, as may serve both to preserve the peace of the Church, and to promote sacred science.

[To the very noble and fraternal Christian desire expressed in the closing sentence of this frank and kind, yet most searching article, we may be permitted to add our own sincere endorsement. Hallowed memories of the past combine with most sacred interest of the present in making us long, even more ardently than the devout and learned Dr. Dorner can, that Dr. Nevin and his school might cease from their aberrant speculations by which they have not only been themselves betrayed into perilous regions of thought and feeling, and unsettled the evangelical faith of many who have more immediately come under their influence, but by which they have also so sadly disturbed the peace of the Church, and put her very life in jeopardy. At times we may have expressed ourselves in regard to these things with a measure of personal severity which seems inconsistent with such a longing. In the heat of controversy, under the influence of the spirit of the *lex talionis*, or the promptings of indignation at the thought (perhaps we should say

suspicion,) of having been duped by specious sophistries, and protestations of loyalty to a cause which was nevertheless assailed, or duped by our own blind regard for men, things may have been said and done which may seem unjustifiable by perfect Christian charity. A deep conviction of the divine truth of the fundamental doctrines of the Reformed Church, and of the apostolic excellence of her genius and practice, and zeal for the maintenance of her distinctive peculiarities in these respects, may have provoked us to undue impatience with the Mercersburg innovations and their authors; especially with attempts to turn the very institutions, which the Church has reared with so much toil, against her. Anger, not without sin, may have been excited at seeing so many of our esteemed young men, the hope of the Church, ensnared by the seductive attractions of theoretic novelties, and showing only too facile aptness in learning lessons of contempt for the legitimate historical character of the Church of our fathers; and then going forth as active emissaries for the propagation of old errors revived throughout our borders. But under all, and amidst all, there has never been a state of mind or heart, not even for an hour, when we would not have rejoiced at the first indications of a repudiation of the errors, and a cordial return to the true faith of the Church. And now, if the friendly Christian mediation of a man so true and learned as Dorner; a man whose judgment and counsel must command respectful attention, will only be heeded, there are none in our Church whose hearts will be more sincerely gladdened than our own.

At the same time we must confess that fear prevails over hope in regard to this desirable result. It is true that history furnishes illustrations of wonderful conversions. But Dr. Nevin and some of his chief disciples have gone so far, and have been progressing by such slow degrees, that they may hardly be expected to retract. They are intelligent enough to know what their course has involved, and they have manifested a persistency and boldness in pursuing it which indicate a fixed determination to hold on in it at any hazard. Time, however, will reveal what we may not venture to prophecy. To it, and above all to Him who rules all its events, we leave the issue, so far as the parties referred to are concerned. Meanwhile, whoever may despise it, let the Church at large, and especially those of her ministry and eldership who are not so far committed to the innovations as to prefer them blindly to our old evangelical faith, take Dr. Dorner's earnest words to heart. Our Church is exposed to imminent peril by those innovations. But the evil is not beyond our control. By prompt, decided action, it may yet be arrested. The profound interests at stake demand that it should be stayed, and stayed at once. Only let the Church awake to a right estimate of the situation of things. She owes more to herself than to those who should be her servants. If these will go wrong, let them go by themselves, but let the Church defend and maintain her sacred heritage in all its purity and integrity.—B.]

ERRATA.

Page 8, fifth line from bottom, after "opponent" read "*of Dr. Nevin.*"

" 9, first line, read "*was*" for "*were*"

" 9, twelfth line from bottom, read "*centuries*" for "*century.*"

" 9, fifth line from bottom, for "*a more,*" read "*more.*"

" 11, second line from bottom, for "*table*" read "*title.*"

" 13, sixth line from bottom, read "*assent*" for "*assert.*"