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A biographical sketch of  
John Williamson Nevin...



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A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

OF

JOHN WILLIAMSON<sup>W</sup> NEVIN, D. D., LL. D.,  
Doctor Præstantissimus.

BY

REV. A. R. KREMER, A. M.

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TO HIS SON,  
JOHN NEVIN KREMER,  
AND TO ALL OTHERS  
WHO HAVE RECEIVED THE NAME OF THE DOCTOR MOST EMINENT,  
THIS LITTLE BOOK IS DEDICATED  
BY THE  
AUTHOR.

## P R E F A C E.

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One of the most important works that has ever been published is the biography of JOHN WILLIAMSON NEVIN, written by his disciple and co-worker, THEODORE APPEL. It is the work of a ripe scholar and master of the great subject undertaken by him, and well has he performed his task. It is a work which required arduous painstaking and labor, though from first to last a labor of love, the final result being a magnificent monument to the memory of the grandest and noblest historical personage of the present age.

All persons who take a real interest in the truth as it is in Jesus, and have made sufficient progress in Christian knowledge to grasp and appropriate the profound thoughts of Dr. Nevin, should by all means possess a copy of Dr. Appel's book. And this, no matter to what demonination they may belong. Dr. Nevin was far above denomination or Church party, a Catholic in the broadest and best sense, who knew only the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, and no other. All persons who can rise to that plane of Apostolic Christianity, or have the mind and wish to do so, would be greatly benefited by reading Dr. Appel's great work.

Then why this little book on the same subject? Answer: Just because it *is* a *little* book, intended for people

who will never read the great and large one of Dr. Appel. This alone is the humble author's reason for writing it. He would rejoice exceedingly if the large work would find its way into every intelligent Christian household; but knowing that such will not be the case, he offers to the general public this little book, with the humble consciousness of its extreme littleness as compared with the greatness of its subject. It is written for people who, after reading it, it is hoped, will want the other book. May the blessing of God rest upon this earnest, honest, though imperfect, design of the

AUTHOR.

BERLIN, PA., JUNE, 1890.

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## CHAPTER I.

### Upper Strasburg.—The Old Homestead.—A Temperance Meeting.

In the shadow of what is locally known as the North Mountain, in Franklin county, Pa., is the village of Upper Strasburg, a place of several hundred inhabitants. It boasts of having once entertained, for a few hours, the "Father of his country"—no idle boast, for one of the old denizens of the neighborhood, a perfectly truthful man, told me a long time ago that he himself, when a boy, saw the great Washington enter the village, where he stopped for a short time at the hostlery, the only one in the place.

My old friend was a man of fervid patriotism, and there were tears in his eyes when he said: "Yes, I saw him! He rode up to the tavern with some other big men, and I said to my father, who held me by the hand, 'Who is that big man that has just got off his horse?' and he answered, 'My son, that is the great and good

Washington.' Yes, I saw our Washington, and it does me good to think of it."

That was, perhaps, the first feather in the cap of the village, which some people thought always carried a rather high head for its size, which fact used to evoke from near outsiders many a contemptuous observation. Ribald jokes would frequently be indulged in at the sore expense of the villagers, and sometimes couplets of grotesque doggerel would be composed by their calumniators, holding up the supposed conceited people in an unfavorable light, and ridiculing their pretensions. Some of those mock verses were composed in Pennsylvania German, evidently to annoy as much as possible the Scotch-Irish element, which for several generations had held undisputed sway in the village. It was treated much like the town of Preston, in England, that was regarded by the country folk as unreasonably proud. The town had a very high steeple on a very low church (and even that was high theologically); the people were not rich, but proud, proud of something, the great steeple for one. And it was thus that the poetic muse inspired some ru-

ral swain to express the general sentiment, on the outside, in regard to Preston :

“Proud Preston,  
Poor people ;  
Low church  
And high steeple.”

All the same, however, the spirit of Strasburg, like that of Preston, would not down, but maintained its proud position against all the satirical efforts of its rude assailants.

The fact is, Strasburg was something of an historical place, small as it was, and still is. Before and after the memorable brief appearance of Washington on its one and only street, it was the centre and headquarters in a community which boasted of men of note, in church and state, and people of respectability and character in the quiet walks of life. Among these, first and foremost was the Nevin family, residing about a mile and a half from the village.

More than forty years ago, when I was a small boy, an open-air temperance meeting was held on the Nevin farm. Temperance meetings in those days were high occasions, and people came for many miles to attend them. Those were the days of Washingtonian pledges, won-

derful conversions from drunkenness to sobriety, and all sorts of oratory on the temperance platform from all sorts of orators—college students, preachers, doctors, lawyers, and, the most popular of all, “reformed drunkards,” with their tales of woe, frantic appeals and coarse wit. On this occasion the speakers, as previously trumpeted throughout that great valley, were my eldest brother, Rev. A. H. Kremer, then a young minister residing in Shippensburg, on the Franklin county side of the town; and a doctor, who told of the dreadful physical effects of drinking alcohol.

My father, who was a pioneer in temperance work, was there, of course, and the whole family, leaving only the faithful dog to take care of the house. The meeting was held in a beautiful little grove, a few hundred yards from the old Nevin farm house, where a platform had been erected for the speakers and men of note, with plenty of seats for the large assembly of people—boards laid across logs, in camp-meeting fashion.

This was the only time I ever saw the old place where Dr. Nevin’s father had lived, and where the Doctor had spent part of his early

life. Some time after that, my father, in a conversation with him, referred to the place and the temperance meeting in the grove—in which young Nevin had doubtless often caught inspiration for his future work—when the Doctor said: “Yes, many a hard day’s work I did on that farm; but I enjoyed it, and it was of great benefit to me in every way.” My father was an ardent admirer of Dr. Nevin, and followed him up as closely as he could in his great career; and his small boys learned thus from childhood to revere and study the man and his works. My reverence for him is therefore a family inheritance; and when I was once favored with the opportunity of passing through and examining the house where he had spent part of his youth, and of looking over the fields which he had helped to till, I seemed to be on enchanted ground, wondering that such a small boy would dare to breathe the same atmosphere that once filled the lungs of the distinguished President of Marshall College. I had just read in the Reformed “Messenger” an article written by one of his enthusiastic disciples at Mercersburg, in which the writer spoke of “the world renowned Nevin,” and the words had lodged deep down in

my juvenile soul. Here I was now where "the world renowned Nevin" used to be when a farmer's boy—house, barn, temperance grove, meadow, Casey's Run, and the broad acres spread out before my young vision as sacred to the Muses, all seemed to me, if I could have expressed it, as if touched by a magic wand.

It was a good providence that made this the early home of Dr. Nevin. Had he been born and reared in a large town or city, it might be said that he was blessed with superior advantages, the environments of social culture, and ready means of personal and educational improvement. On the contrary, the real advantages were on the farm. There was the stuff, rich and pure from the lofty mountain ranges, that nourished the flame of his youthful life. The exercises of farm industry are infinitely better than dumb bells, or Indian clubs, or any of the artificial city devices for the manufacture of muscle. These are good for people so unfortunate as to be deprived of the sights, sounds and exercises of a farm located near one of Pennsylvania's glorious mountains, yet they are only poor substitutes for the plow, pitch-fork and other instruments of husbandry. It was here

that Dr. Nevin laid a good physical and mental foundation for that wonderful and grand superstructure known afterwards in the intellectual world as one of its greatest representatives. There is poetry, as well as hard sense, in the old couplet :

“God made the country,  
Man made the town.”

In that quiet home, rural pursuits did not occupy all the time by any means, as is too often the case in the country. Young Nevin's parents were persons of mental culture and refinement. The father was a man of learning, having received a liberal education, being a graduate of Dickinson College, and ranking in ability while at college with such men as Roger B. Taney and James Buchanan, both Dickinson students, and of high grade. It may be easily inferred, therefore, that the country home of young Nevin was a family institution of learning, and such it really was. Here the father prepared his own sons for college, and so thorough was the drill in Latin, Greek and mathematics, that John was prepared for the Freshman class, which he entered at the early age of fourteen. He worked on the farm and studied at intervals, often taking his books with him to



the field; and yet, with all such seeming disadvantages and interruptions, at the age of fourteen was thoroughly prepared to enter college; and though the youngest of his class, he was equal, if not superior, to any of his superiors in age.

John Williamson Nevin, the subject of this biographical sketch, was born on the 20th of February, 1803. His birth-place is not where I attended the temperance meeting, but a farm near Shippensburg, his father having removed to the Upper Strasburg farm some years later. Here were born a large family of children, and all, in after years, were noted for intelligence, and occupied high positions in state, society and church. Dr. Appel, in his great work, gives a full account of this distinguished family, and the reader is here referred to that book for information as to the Nevin family tree. I will only say here that Dr. Nevin was of Scotch-Irish descent, and that his ancestors were of the very best stock and blood, in the best sense of the word. He had a right to be proud of his ancestry, but his ancestors (if there is pride in the other world) have a much better right to be proud of *him*. He is the Alcyone in the centre of the group that bears his name.

## CHAPTER II.

**At College.**

As already stated, young Nevin entered the Freshman class in college, after a careful preparation by his father, when he was but fourteen years of age. He had no experience in the usual preparatory drill of the academy or high school. But he had the advantage of excellent home training, while at the same time his physical powers were developed by such work on the farm as was suitable to his age.

It is not often that a farm lad is prepared for college by his father. Not many farmers are college graduates. It is a pity that there are so few; it is well there are some; and it is well for the whole world to-day that farmer Nevin was one of these few. If only one out of every graduating class in our American colleges would choose agriculture for his earthly pursuit, take to himself an intelligent and sensible wife, and then settle down permanently on a farm—what noble results there would be! What a power

such farmers would be in country places! How they would elevate the social life in their several communities! How they might instruct their less cultured neighbors in *the science* of agriculture, and in many other things that men of the soil ought to know! Farmer Nevin was such a man, and his influence was felt all around. His farm house was a centre from which flowed out educational and refining influences in all directions; and the neighboring farmers were all the better for having him in their midst.

But Mr. Nevin was more than a learned farmer. He was what many college graduates are not: he was a Christian man, a consistent member of Christ's mystical body, the Church, in connection with the Middle Spring Presbyterian congregation, whose place of worship was near his home. He and his excellent wife brought up their children in the faith of the gospel. They gave them to the Lord in His holy covenant of baptism in their infancy, thus planting them in the house of the Lord, that they might flourish in the courts of our God, and carefully taught them the lessons of our holy religion.

The influence of such a man among plain country people could not be otherwise than good. His Christian morality was set in the frame-

work of thorough mental culture, like apples of gold in pictures of silver. He did not use his learning to the disadvantage of those who were not possessed of such intellectual power. His neighbors well knew that, and that they could entrust to him any interest of theirs when they were in need of direction and counsel. Mental culture is a power for good or evil; in his case it was a power for good.

The reader knows something now about John W. Nevin's mental and moral outfit when he entered Union College, in Schenectady, New York. A mere boy, and from the country, he was now to associate with young men, the most of whom, perhaps, were brought up in town or city, where from their infancy they had breathed the atmosphere of refined society, and were familiar with no other. But he was equal to the new demand. It matters little *where* a youth has been reared; but it does matter *by whom*. He had a double advantage: he had been brought into daily contact with plain and simple-minded people, who knew little of the great world of humanity, became familiar with the crude ideas, thoughts, emotions and simple aspirations and virtues of the common masses, also their needs and the importance of their mental

and spiritual elevation ; while, at the same time, in the home circle he lived in a different world from theirs, and was separated from them as if by an ocean or a continent. His own proper life was formed and moulded by the mental and spiritual life of an intelligent Christian home. That was far better than to have been brought up amid the fashionable surroundings of an aristocratic section of a city. His culture was true and solid, and free from any superfluity of mere outward polish. He was not, therefore, a stranger to the real humanities and refinements which are the natural concomitants of true education ; so that, great as was the difference between the home life and rural scenes of his childhood and the imposing presence of a great institution of learning, he received no severe mental shock by the sudden change. He was constitutionally modest, and even timid, and being the youngest in his class, it may well be supposed that it was something of a trial to him at first to be doomed to long years of separation from his dear home, and something of a task to adapt himself to the new situation ; yet his solid mental endowment and training soon brought him in full sympathy with the new world which he had entered.

## CHAPTER III.

**At College.—Religious Interest.**

The thorough instruction which young Nevin had received from his learned father, served him well at college, where his standing was always high, youthful as he was. Owing to his natural timidity, he never exhibited what is called “dash ;” was not an eloquent debater in the literary society to which he belonged ; in fact, according to his own account, he could scarcely frame, off-hand, a coherent sentence when appearing before his fellows during the first years of his collegiate course. There were with him at college, students with glib tongues and ready wit, who, in after years, were proud to do reverence to the once timid boy, who as theologian and philosopher astonished the learned world. Evidences were not rare, even when he was a child, of extraordinary talent. Dr. Appel relates that an old German lady once saw him at his grandparents when he was twelve years old, heard his conversation and was amazed at his

wonderful knowledge. That reminds me of my early ministry, when that same old lady was one of my most honored and excellent parishioners, over eighty years of age. In the narrative referred to, she is spoken of as a German woman—which needs explanation. She was not of foreign birth, could speak English as fluently and correctly as German, and her reading, of which she did a great deal, was mostly English. The Reformed “Messenger” was her constant companion, she knew something of every minister in the Reformed Church, had an almost unlimited memory, and when she related the incident about young John Nevin and his wisdom, her story could be relied on as perfectly correct.

One event in Mr. Nevin’s life at college must be mentioned as having an important bearing on his future history. When he was about half way through his college course, a “revival of religion,” so called, broke out among the students. There seemed to be what has often been termed “a great awakening.” There were strong cries and tears, mourning over sinful condition, and earnest striving after a spiritual state that would insure the salvation of the soul. Mr. Nevin, whose Christian training would naturally

cause him to regard with solemnity such religious earnestness and seeking of salvation, fell in with the movement, became a subject of it, and after many severe soul struggles, arrived at a spiritual state which he ventured to hope was the great desideratum, conversion.

Up to this time he had not made a public profession of Christian faith; but he now felt prepared to do so, and with others was received into full communion with the Church.

In after years Dr. Nevin spoke and wrote of that college "revival" in terms of severe and no doubt just criticism. Before he entered college, it was still the good custom in the Presbyterian Church generally to teach the baptized children the fundamental truths of the Christian religion, that they might be prepared to assume for themselves, at a proper age, the obligations and duties of a personal consecration to the service of God as full members of the Church. It had been the recognized duty of the minister to catechize the young and all who needed elementary instruction, according to the method of instruction as appointed by ecclesiastical authority. The pastor of the old Middle Spring church, to which the Nevins belonged, was a faithful pas-



tor to the children, the lambs of Christ's fold, and carefully supplemented their home training by teaching them more fully the truths of the Christian religion as set forth in the Westminster catechisms. The educational idea in religion was firmly maintained and practised in that church and by its pastor, and young Nevin received a full share of the spiritual benefits conferred in this way. But when the "revival" turned in at Union College, the promoters of it taught and insisted upon an entirely different theory of personal religion. No account whatever was made of covenant relation to God through holy baptism. The baptized and unbaptized were not necessarily different in any way. Worse, still, for those would-be evangelists, the most careful Christian training, received at the Christian home and in the church, all went for nothing in the estimation of the new teachers. What they insisted on as the one great essential was, that the soul pass through a crucible of torture in a sort of spiritual inquisition, the inquisitors meanwhile increasing the agony until the racked subject "yields," from sheer exhaustion, and collapses into a state that is called conversion. Mr. Nevin, with many others, was drawn into that whirlpool of soul

horrors, and came out partially satisfied that he had done at least sufficient penance to his conscience and to his God to entitle him to a place among the converted. He united with the Church, as if he had never belonged to it before, that is, under the impression that Christ had never before received him into His fold—in other words, that his baptism had been an empty form, if not a wicked mockery of sacred things.

This was not true Presbyterianism, nor Calvinism. It was New England Puritanism run mad, which had insinuated itself into a large part of American Christianity and gained ascendancy to such a degree that any other theory of religion was by many regarded with suspicion and even pious horror, or, according to humor, with the most self-complacent pietistic commiseration. The character of that type of religion was essentially legalistic. It was law and gospel mechanically joined together in such a way that the gospel seemed to be omitted altogether—the gospel, with gospel left out. In words every possible account was made of God doing all for the sinner, and of the sinner being justified by faith alone; and yet when the work of converting sinners was in hand, the means resorted to looked

very much as if righteousness and salvation came entirely by works. The air was rife with vociferations against Romish penance, and yet the vociferators themselves insisted on severer penances than Roman priests usually require - the penances of what the revivalists called "law work," a kind of religious flint-mill in which the soul coming out alive would do well. Romanism is tame as compared with the legalistic demands made on men by the Puritanic system.

The more modern style of modern Christianity differs from the old Puritanism in this, that it is not in such horrible earnest, and not so dreadful in its demands. Its adherents are not so firmly set in their religious ways as were their spiritual progenitors, and they have found easier and quicker methods of casting out devils and increasing the number of the converted. They tell sinners there is very little for them to do; that they have only to believe "right now," and instantly they will be born again. Strolling evangelists are frequently employed by regular pastors (who ought to do their own work) to awaken religious interest in their pastoral charges to which they have been regularly and solemnly appointed, and they do things with amazing celerity. The old Puritanic "law

work" is almost ignored, and the new way of becoming full fledged Christians is in perfect accord with the rapidity of the present age. Yet the underlying principle is the same in both periods. They are but two phases of one system. In both there is the same disregard of the sacramental and educational idea of the old apostolic and historical Church. Great care is taken to disabuse minds of the soul destroying error of laying any stress whatever on baptism, as though baptism had in it nothing heavenly and divine. But this subject will come up again farther on.

Suffice it to say here, that Dr. Nevin in due time saw fully the errors of the unchurchly revival system and exposed them in all their rankness. He did not speak lightly of what he experienced during the religious awakening at Union College; he treated the matter with solemnity, and spoke of that period in his spiritual life as of great importance in both a negative and a positive view. He was led by it to make a full profession of faith in Christ, and to take a positive stand in the Church as a covenant child of God. But notwithstanding such important results, he nevertheless did not fail to see the radical errors which marked the whole movement and the system to which it belonged.

## CHAPTER IV.

**The History of Twenty-two Years Briefly Told.—  
The Theological Student.—The Author.  
—Teacher of Hebrew.—Theologi-  
cal Professor and Preacher.**

Mr. Nevin graduated with honor at the early age of eighteen. The severe application to study during the four years of his college course was too much for his undeveloped and rather delicate physical organism, and he returned to his paternal home broken in health, a miserable dyspeptic in body and mind.

The religious crucible through which he had passed, was of a sickly, sentimental and morose order, all in one, and had much to do with his physical condition, as he himself afterwards declared. His piety was real and sincere, but so tinged with the prevailing pietistic legalism of New England that it made him look with suspicion on everything in religion that did not square with its exacting standard; and his religious morbidity seemed to penetrate his whole being, spirit, soul and body.

But the change from academic life to that of a quiet home in the country in due time wrought a good and wholesome effect. He worked on the farm, exercised on horseback and inhaled the life-supporting atmosphere that flowed like streams of living water from the great mountains near by. His morbid habit of mind and spirit also yielded to these gentle remedial influences, and he took gradually a more cheerful view of life and religion.

During this time of relaxation from regular study—a period of two years—his mind was much exercised in regard to his future calling. His parents and friends had regarded it as a foregone conclusion that he should enter the ministry, and he had himself, though somewhat vaguely, this great object in view. But the matter had now to be decided, and after much reflection and earnest prayer he determined to enter upon a course of theological study and prepare himself for the gospel ministry. So in the year 1823, at the age of twenty, he entered the theological Seminary at Princeton, the leading school of divinity in the Presbyterian Church.

Mr. Nevin found life at this school of the prophets congenial and pleasant. His progress

in his new studies was entirely satisfactory, which he pursued with a solemn sense of their importance, having in view constantly the salvation of men through his future ministry of God's word. For some time he had a great dislike for *Hebrew*, and was tempted to abandon it altogether; but taking the good advice of a friend, he continued the study, and soon afterwards became as much interested in that sacred language as he had formerly been disgusted with it; and when he completed his theological course he was the best Hebrew scholar in the Seminary.

And right here one fact deserves special mention. Mr. Nevin performed a feat that may possibly have been accomplished by a few others elsewhere, but by none to my knowledge; that is, he read critically during his seminary course the entire Hebrew Bible, and so made himself master of the entire Old Testament text in the original, at the age of twenty-three, and while yet a theological under-graduate. This alone was a sufficient prophecy of his future glorious career as a theologian. It showed the wonderful intellectual powers of the man, and indicated what those powers would be when fully developed.

Another remarkable fact in this connection was, that immediately after the close of his seminary course he was appointed professor *ad interim* of the Hebrew language and literature, in the same institution from which he had just graduated, to take the place of Dr. Charles Hodge during a two years' absence in Europe. He filled the place with great ability and to the entire satisfaction of all concerned.

Another remarkable fact belongs to this period. It was during those two years that he wrote the "Biblical Antiquities," the excellent and well known work published by the American Sunday School Union. I remember seeing it among my father's books when I was a child, and how my parents prized the work as one of their best household treasures. Years afterwards I heard Dr. Schaff speak of it as a remarkably clear, learned and readable production, differing in this respect entirely from the usually dry bundles of facts called archaeologies. Another sure sign of the future "world renowned Nevin."

When Dr. Hodge returned from Europe and resumed his place in the Seminary, Mr. Nevin was still quite a young man, only twenty-five. But he had made his mark; he had stepped



upon the ladder which reached to the stars, and it did not require a great prophet to see that his proper place was to be at the upper end—wiser than all his teachers. The young teacher of Hebrew in that noted institution attracted the attention of thoughtful and earnest men, though he did not himself seem to be aware of the impression he had made, nor seemed to have the least idea of ever rising to eminence, least of all to that immense height to which, eagle like, he rose. Men like him were in demand, and always will be. Such a light could not be hid. His work in the Seminary, being limited to the period of Dr. Hodge's absence in Europe, was now ended, but to be continued, however, in another place. The greatness of the man was already seen and felt. A man of twenty-five, who had spent eighteen of those years among plain people in the country, a master and teacher of Hebrew, and author of one of the best of Biblical works—such a man would be sought after.

What was to be called the Western Theological Seminary was about to be established in Allegheny, and the chief promoters of the enterprise looked to Princeton for a professor of Biblical Literature, and the choice fell upon Mr.

Nevin as the only one to be thought of for the place. He accepted the appointment. This was in 1828, but it was not until 1830 that he entered upon the duties of his new position. The managers of the institution could not get ready any sooner for putting it into operation. Meanwhile Mr. Nevin was licensed to preach by the Carlisle Presbytery, and during this interval he frequently preached, as opportunity offered, in churches, school houses and private dwellings. He also had now another good chance to gain physical health and vigor, and he made good use of this interval for such purpose.

Prof. Nevin continued in the Western Theological Seminary for ten years. The position was one of far greater responsibility and harder work *then* than the same is now, in that and other similar institutions. It was not manned with a sufficient force of professors for a proper division of labor, and Prof. Nevin, always ready to do more than his own share of work, carried extra burdens during that entire decade. He also preached almost as regularly as if he had a pastoral charge. Meanwhile he received ordination, and so was invested with the full power and authority of the sacred office. As

professor of theology and preacher of the gospel he was most earnest and diligent, and by precept and example adorned the gospel of Christ and magnified his high office. A volume could be written of his work while in Allegheny, but the object and plan of this sketch will permit of only a brief outline.

During this period Prof. Nevin made himself master of the German language. This opened to him a new world of thought, and prepared him for the great transformation in his whole inward being after he had entered the very home of German philosophy and theology, in its American representative, the German Reformed Church.

On January 1st, 1835, Prof. Nevin was united in marriage to Miss Martha Jenkins, a daughter of the Hon. Robert Jenkins, of Windsor Place, near Churchtown, in Lancaster co., Pa. Mrs. Nevin, who died recently in the 85th year of her age, was a woman of the highest character and culture, a true and congenial companion to her husband; and scarcely can too much be said in her praise. They were blessed with a family of eight children, five sons and three daughters, of whom five—two sons and the

three daughters—are living. All these are in every way an honor to their parents.

In 1839 Jefferson College conferred on Prof. Nevin the honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity. He was a real doctor long before that, and the conferring of the title was simply a formal and official declaration of what he was already. It is in very many instances quite different of late years. Every second rate academy, chartered as a college, can and does confer the titles of Ph. D., D. D. and LL. D., and frequently upon persons whose unfitness to receive them is their most distinguishing mark. As to the modern conferring of D. D., it would be amusing were it not for the fact that the *worthy* doctors are scandalized and belittled by the small fry who falsely, and yet legally, flourish that greatest and noblest of all titles. It has become so common, that a respectable theologian must be almost ashamed to die either with or without the honorary suffix. In 1839, however, and thereabouts, the degree was rarely conferred upon men who were unworthy of it; and as for Dr. Nevin, he was a doctor every whit and all through, with or without the title. In 1873 his alma mater, Union College, did itself the honor of conferring on him the degree of LL. D.

The closing part of this important decade in the career of Dr. Nevin forms one of the most interesting chapters of that period. He was still a young man, but his fame had spread abroad; he stood high in his own denomination, and was favorably known beyond its borders as a man of extraordinary intellect and ability as a scholar, and above all as a Christian of apostolic piety and zeal. The German Reformed Church, the American representative of the original Reformed Church of Europe, and related to the Presbyterian Church as mother to daughter, and sharing with it a common origin, was not ignorant of the man and his work. Especially some of her leading men were well informed in regard to him. It so happened that a professor of theology was to be chosen by the Eastern Reformed Synod for the Seminary at Mercersburg. Several were elected, but they declined the appointment. Then the attention of Synod was directed to the Allegheny Professor. After prayerful deliberation he was unanimously chosen.

If the first Synod of the apostles and elders at Jerusalem was guided by the Holy Spirit, as all Christians believe, then just as certainly was that Reformed Synod so guided to its unanimous

conclusion and act. It was a synodical act on which turned some of the most important religious events of the 19th century.

Dr. Nevin was informed of his election by a committee in person; and not long after the members of the committee had returned to their homes, he returned a favorable answer, accepting the call. The letter was addressed to Rev. Dr. B. S. Schneck, of Chambersburg, as President of Synod.

Those who desire to read a full account of the various steps leading to this result; of the evident directions of Providence in the case; the conspiring together of events leading to the desired object; and the harmony of thought and feeling on both sides of the transaction, should secure a copy of Dr. Appel's *Life of Dr. Nevin*, where they can read the whole story—a story whose plot is all solid fact, and as entertaining as a romance. Here are a few sentences of Dr. Nevin's letter of acceptance. Get the other book, and read the whole of an epistle that is apostolic in spirit and in wisdom, and presents in miniature a picture without a flaw of the man who wrote it. He says:

“ Thus do I find myself constrained to go into

the German Reformed Church. Let it not be thought, however, that I go reluctantly or coldly into her communion, now that the duty is settled. I go, indeed, with fear and trembling ; but I carry along with me my entire will. I give myself wholly to the German Reformed Church, and find no difficulty in making her interests my own. No Church can boast of a better creed or a better ecclesiastical frame-work. Her fathers rank high in the history of the Reformation. The spirit of a time-hallowed faith, such as could once make martyrs, older than the Presbyterianism of Scotland, is still enshrined in her articles and forms, and the German Church in this country has become a rising interest. No section of our American Zion is more important. None embraces vaster resources of power in proportion to its limits. None exhibits a richer intellectual ore, available in the same way for the purpose of religion. I find no lack of considerations here to enlist my sympathies or to stimulate my zeal. I can go heartily into such a Church, and in this spirit I now accept of the call of your Synod to the professorship at Mercersburg."

It was enough. The people to whom Dr.

Nevin was coming as a teacher of holy and sacred things, as a spiritual guide and helmsman, had before their eyes the portrait of his soul, and could see that here was a man sent to them by the Lord Himself. He was not dissatisfied with his own tribe of Israel to which he belonged from his birth, nor in a spirit of unfilial prodigality was he now going out into foreign parts to seek a better fortune; but as a true servant of Christ he obeyed the plain indications of His will and yielded to His sovereign pleasure.



## CHAPTER V.

**Transition.**

The near prospect of Dr. Nevin's advent was a bright anticipation for the live members of the Reformed Church, and was the subject of daily conversation. I was at that time a mere child, in my eighth year, but the conversations of my father and mother, and the older members of the family, on the now leading subject I shall never forget. I can understand now, as I could not then, the enthusiastic manner, the fervid tones, and the delighted countenances at table and fireside, where all was animation in the discussion of Dr. Nevin's coming to Mercersburg and its bearing on the future of the Reformed Church.

I remember well how a Presbyterian elder and friend of my father tartly spoke of Dr. Nevin as a "turn coat," and reproached him rather severely for making the transition; to which my father replied that Dr. Nevin did it conscientiously with the view to accomplish the

greatest possible good; that he was influenced by the highest and holiest motives, and acted in accordance with what he believed were plain indications of Providence. My father's intimate acquaintance with Drs. B. S. Schneck and S. R. Fisher was of great use to him in the way of learning the inside history in the movement which resulted in securing Dr. Nevin for the Reformed Church, and from them he learned much of his previous history.

At Mercersburg Dr. Nevin became associated with Dr. F. A. Rauch, President of Marshall College. Dr. Rauch, though only about thirty-four years of age, was one of the most learned men of his time. He was a German, and familiar with the whole philosophy and learning of Germany; and at the same time was a thorough English scholar—in fact, a sort of universal genius. The two men were outwardly totally different. The man of German blood was impulsive and of the most fiery enthusiasm, and showed it in speech and action; the other, with equally high aims, was usually calm, of wonderful natural dignity, deliberate in all he said and did, and as unswerving in right doing as the stars in their courses. But aside from difference

of temperament and external personality, they were in their inmost natures much alike, and very much of one mind. They were, in fact, two very congenial spirits, their differences mutually compensating for what was lacking in each. Dr. Rauch regarded his new fellow workman in the great field of thought with feelings of profound reverence, and the regard was mutual.

Dr. Nevin had already mastered the German language; and now that he was in a Church whose pedigree, life and spirit were largely German, he found special use for his late acquisition. His association with Dr. Rauch, a German to the manor born, gave a new impulse to the cultivation of the vast field of literature and learning which lay open before him. The companionship of the learned German was equal to a university library, and better; for the living and speaking organ in the person of a true representative of the best German thought and culture was of far greater account than the most massive learning bound up in books. Dr. Nevin had both; he had the living exponent of German learning as a companion, and from him he discovered the ways and avenues leading to the

richest mines of German philosophy and theology.

On the other hand, the towering intellect of Dr. Nevin and his ripe scholarship fired the enthusiasm of his learned colleague, and aided him much in every way. The two men were each greater and more useful as public teachers than they would have been alone. United like David and Jonathan, in hearty sympathy with each other, they filled their great offices, as it were, with a double force in each. Thus Dr. Nevin, right from the beginning of his labors in Mercersburg, felt at home, as he could not otherwise, associated as he was with Dr. Rauch.

But this delightful affiliation of kindred spirits continued only a year, at the end of which Dr. Rauch passed from his work and place on earth to the higher employments of the saints in heaven. But it was a year of the greatest importance to Dr. Nevin. With ordinary mortals a single year may add but little to their mental stock, but not so in this case. That year began and ended with the unthinking multitude like a story or a song, without any permanent impress upon it of sublime thought or deed; but to those two kindred spirits it was a year of immense

consequence; a year of intellectual and spiritual enlargement, that would be of vast account in the whole future career of the survivor; a year of bountiful sowing that must produce a glorious harvest in the world of mind. After Dr. Rauch's death, the Board of Trustees of Marshall College elected Dr. Nevin President of the institution. A double burden now rested upon him, in College and Seminary, which he carried for twelve years without interruption—a period of extraordinary interest, not only for the Reformed Church, but for the Church and world at large. Dr. Nevin, in the meantime, came to be regarded everywhere by people of good mental caliber as an intellectual prodigy, and the compound adjective, “world renowned,” as applied to him, and which struck my mental ear so forcibly when I was a small boy, was no exaggeration.

## CHAPTER VI.

**Reformed and Presbyterian.**

What's in a name? A rose would be as fragrant and lovely, if called by any other name—so it is said. Only this, however, if the rose had not been just what it is, it would not have received such a sweet name. If by general consent it should henceforth be called catnip, tansy or garlic, then the rose would simply be slandered and misrepresented, though its own character would remain unchanged.

Yes, there is something in a name. The Church is called Catholic, because it is not sectarian, clannish, partisan, or national; but is universal in its nature, and indivisible, the one Apostolic, holy Catholic Church, the mystical body of Christ. This holy Catholic Church is an object of Christian faith, as expressed in the Apostles' Creed, being the bearer of Christ's life and saving virtues to individuals; in her official character mediating the grace of Christ to men, the Lord's bride, and the mother of all true believers.

But contrary to the divine idea of true inward and outward Christian unity, the Church of Christ, through the perversity of men, has been marred by schism and torn by division. The Reformation of the sixteenth century was not a schismatic movement; the design of the reformers was to remove errors in doctrine and practice from the existing Church, and not destroy or separate from the Church itself.

The Reformation did not imply a new Church, but a renewal of the Apostolic form and creed of the Church; a casting aside and rejection of merely human doctrines and practices by which the Church had been borne down for ages; a going back to primitive simplicity and purity, and at the same time a forward movement in the right direction. The Reformation was radical only in the sense of rooting out destructive evils; it was conservative, in that it retained whatever in ecclesiastical order, ritual and creed was found to be in agreement with Holy Scripture. It made the Bible the ultimate rule of faith and practice, and rejected the Romish doctrine that Christian tradition (much of it *un-christian*) was of equal authority with the canonical Scriptures. It rested upon the immovable foundation that

the Word of God was the only absolute rule of Christian doctrine, and that men are justified by faith as the root of all Christian graces and good works. The Church as thus established is the Church not merely as starting in the sixteenth century, but as existing from its birth on the day of Pentecost. What more appropriate name then could be given to it than the name *Reformed*? The Catholic Church re-formed, formed anew. Not the Church of Peter or Paul, or Apollos, but the Church of the Apostles, whose head is Christ. Not the Church of Zwingli, or Calvin, or any other of the leaders in the Reformation, but the Church of Christ, victorious over the corrupting influences of the world which had for ages sought her life and brought her to the verge of destruction. The same Church now, but re-formed—and that is her name, by which is meant the Holy Catholic Church of Christ, after fifteen centuries of conflict with external enemies, triumphant over them all.

The name is of immense importance, because there is in it not the least suspicion of sectarianism or schism. The real and substantial name is Catholic, and “Reformed” denotes that it is *not* the Catholic Church that claims exclusively



the title and stands convicted of apostacy from the simplicity of the gospel, and that it is the old Church of which we read in the New Testament. Now the Church which bears the name Reformed, while it by no means assumes to be the only ecclesiastical body that could justly claim the title, has at least the advantage of original possession, and of the name itself. The original Reformed Church is represented in this country under that title. Its form of government is presbyterial, but it is not therefore called the *Presbyterian* Church. It has equally the elements and powers of episcopacy, but its proper name is not *Episcopal*. It has all that is good and true in congregationalism, but its name is not *Congregational*. The name of Zwingli will always be honored and cherished by the Reformed Church, but not as its name. It is of much account that the Reformed Church is not named after a man or some form of church government, and that its name means everything that belongs to the Church of Christ, no more and no less.

Dr. Nevin felt the power of the Reformed name when he was once rightly settled in his new home. He realized a greater degree of

spiritual freedom than he could in the Presbyterian Church. He found in the Reformed Church a freedom from sectarian narrowness such as he had seen nowhere else; and he rightly attributed this to the fact that it was in its reigning spirit true to its significant name; not maintaining its existence by the magic of a word, a doctrine, a shibboleth, the name of a leader, or something equally unessential and narrow. The Presbyterian Church was cramped by a confession of faith, a leading part of which was in conflict with the belief of a majority of Christians. It fairly bristled with the doctrine of God's absolute decrees and of Christ's redemption eternally planned for the elect only. In the Reformed Church Dr. Nevin found a different and more refreshing order of thought and Christian doctrine as embodied in the Heidelberg Catechism, and in the Reformed theological literature of Germany. He found the Heidelberg Catechism to be filled with the life and power of Christianity, and entirely free from any declaration whatever not consonant with the articles of "our undoubted Christian faith." No vexed questions concerning divine election and reprobation, and nothing to disturb the tender.

conscience of a true believer. The Westminster standards were indeed grand and noble confessional symbols, but they were not of a truly œcumenical character, and suited only to such as could endorse their central and leading dogma of divine decrees as elaborated and taught by Calvin. When Dr. Nevin came into the Reformed Church, it was suspected by some that he would "Presbyterianize" it, and eventually bring about an organic union of the two bodies. But it was not long till it was manifest to all who took an interest in the subject, that he not only felt comfortable in his new ecclesiastical relations, but that he found in his new home a church life that was more congenial to his spirit than what he had ever before experienced. He identified himself fully with the mother Church of the Reformation, and found in her bosom what he had longed for in a much larger denomination, but yet much more contracted sphere of thought. He felt more at liberty now to sound the depths of theological ideas, being no longer fettered by stiff confessional declarations. The Heidelberg Catechism, clear and positive, yet at the same time was an open door for a profound and original investigator to bound forth into the free air and sun-light of divine truth.

Thus, instead of leading his adopted Church into other pastures, he did more than any other man to lift up her own standards and bring back her people—such as had wondered off and fallen into new and strange ways—to her ancient creed and time honored customs, believing that these were in harmony with the Word of God. The more he studied the history and character of the Reformed Church, the more he saw her glorious Catholicity and the mighty power lodged in her, that needed only to be stirred into activity in order to effect mighty things for God and humanity.

Dr. Nevin was not slow to discover departures from the Reformed faith. While in some quarters he saw dead formality, in others there were signs of falling in with the shallow revival spirit, much in vogue at the time. What is called the “anxious bench” system, was introduced here and there in Reformed churches, while a large part of the Lutheran Church was completely carried away with it. As a general thing, where this foreign element was allowed to enter the Reformed Church, it was through the plausible persuasions of floating, glib-tongued evangelists, whose affectations of superior piety

were well calculated to deceive honest and guileless people, trained under a far better system, but not all of them proof against pious fraud. The so-called revival or anxious bench system was exceedingly aggressive, too, as well as insinuating and crafty. On occasions it could be modest as a maiden and gentle as a lamb; or, if opposed or crossed in its designs at any time, it could rail and storm with fury, and consign all opposition to the lower regions. I have been an eye and ear witness to it all.

This foreign unchurchly spirit, and the very opposite of its saintly pretentions, sought the headquarters of the Reformed Church at Mercersburg. The congregation at that place was visited by one of the most aggressive apostles of the New Measure system; and for a time he had his own way, the people yielding like innocent and helpless children to his methods. Meanwhile Dr. Nevin kept an eye on it, gauged it, weighed it in the balances of God's Word, and pronounced the judgment of "Tekel" against the whole movement. He was victorious, and the deluded people were brought back and started on the true gospel course, in which they have continued ever since.

## CHAPTER VII.

**True and False Evangelism.**

When Dr. Nevin struck the blow that crushed the demon of fanaticism and false Christianity at the literary and theological capital of the Reformed Church, he made a new epoch in his own theological life. He now studied the nature of Christianity, theoretical and practical, as never before, in the light of the Heidelberg Catechism and of the historical Church. He saw that most of the religious denominations in this country were not in full accord with church history, and had but little of the true historical spirit; and that if the Reformed Church would live and grow according to her own order and constitution, she must throw off the foreign elements introduced into her sacred enclosure, and cease to burn strange fire upon her altars.

It was just at this time when the Church was beset by a false religious spirit from abroad to rob her of her own genius and apostolic inheritance, that Dr. Nevin prepared a "Tract for the

Times," and sent it on its mission of instruction and warning. The title of the work was, "The Anxious Bench," under which he included the whole scheme of religion as conceived and understood by a large part of the Christian public. In this little work he well nigh exhausted the whole subject, and by unanswerable argument showed that the theory of Christianity and practical religion, as represented by the "Anxious Bench," was shallow, sentimental, and in its reigning thought unscriptural.

The Anxious Bench or New Measure system of religion and evangelism, may, in general terms, be called the *emotional*, over against the *educational* system. The main object of preaching, under this system, and all evangelistic work (especially during a "revival") is to operate upon the emotional nature, the feelings of men and women, and to stir their souls to such depths that they will be forced to cry out for relief, which they are told they can have if they struggle on and don't give up until God shall say, "It is enough," when there will be a sudden change from an unconverted to a converted state. To accomplish this result, the preacher, now in terrible and awful, now in mellow and

persuasive tones, appeals to sinners to "flee the wrath to come." He pictures heaven with its glories and hell with its horrors, and represents religion as the means mainly of gaining the one and escaping the other. Accordingly, changes are rung on Scripture passages which seem to favor such ideas, and used with powerful temporary effect. Sinners are wildly exhorted to cry out, like the Philippian jailer, "What must I do to be saved?" The day of Pentecost is spoken of in a similar strain as a day of tremendous revival, when three thousand dreadful sinners, filled with fear of the coming judgment, frantically cried out, "What shall we do to be saved?"—even mutilating holy Scripture in their blind subjection to the emotional and legalistic idea of religion. They add "to be saved" to the question of those devout Jews, as if it *must* be so meant; as if salvation could only mean remission of punishment in the next world, and as if "religion" would not be an important matter, were it not for the infinite danger of neglecting it. Then the joys of conversion are the joys of escape from hell. There may even seem to be rejoicing in the Lord after "conversion," and a real enjoyment of the spiritual blessings of the



gospel, but (except in cases where the turning to God is real and true, in spite of the miserable system) it is not hard to see that it is a mere ebullition of happy feeling and a reaction after a hard mental and physical struggle. It is the religion of emotion and slavish fear, not of genuine repentance and the godly sorrow from which it proceeds, and which seldom or never comes by observation or with any outward exhibition of inward struggles. It is not the religion of genuine faith in Christ; though the Anxious Bench exhortation that is the oftenest repeated is (amid enough confusion to prevent either thinking or believing): "Believe—only believe *now*, right now, believe, believe, and you are saved." All this without the preacher or exhorter knowing whether the "mourner" knows the ground principles of the Christian religion or not.

All this might be expected of those sects which came into existence through the conceit of ignorance, and must necessarily make up in "bodily exercise" for what they lack in knowledge. But the New Measure system is not confined to *them*. The same system in different form is upheld by denominations that boast of

their history and learning. There is no wild display of feeling at their revival meetings. It is the fashion to observe strict order and solemn quiet. The inquiry room is put instead of the noisy Anxious Bench. The anxious are not required to spend hours on their knees struggling to "get through." The "special effort," as the revival *now* is often called, may continue for weeks without any display of feeling. The most noted evangelist of the present generation checks at his meetings the least demonstration of this kind. He "means business," and has no time to lose through the indulgence of religious gymnastics. But it all belongs to the Anxious Bench system. It changes its manner and style to suit the whims of the period or place, but is still the same in principle under every form it has ever assumed. In times past the revival in respectable communities was not only free from "noise and confusion," but was also marked by due solemnity in speech and conduct on the part of preachers and religious people. It is no doubt the same still in many places; and yet of late years it is not considered essential at all to be specially serious on such momentous occasions. The evangelist may be a habitually sol-

emn person, or he may be a clown, a dealer in low wit, a provoker of side-splitting laughter; he may make his audience weep or laugh, be silent as death or applaud to the echo - it is all right, only so that the great point is not missed, the conversion of sinners. Even if the crowd go to the meetings from mere curiosity, to see and hear some noted evangelist, whose fame is throughout the Christian world, they think it will be well; for some of them at least may be converted; that is, they "will not hear Moses and the prophets," but they will be persuaded, if one come to them from abroad, and has a great reputation. "Religion is at a low ebb," they say; and the ordained ambassadors of Christ, with long faces, in solemn conference, decide that a united onslaught shall be made on the works of the enemy. Doctors of divinity and pastors of lower degree, but all having the apostolic commission and seal, lo, and behold! unite in a Macedonian cry for help to an unordained and irresponsible evangelist; and not for help simply, but to do the work they had solemnly engaged, under official divine authority, to do themselves. Of course thousands flock to the church, or hall, night after night.

On the platform are seated a score of ordained ministers, regular *pastors* of churches. What if the evangelist would fail to arrive! What on earth would those thousands of dear people do? To be sure, there are a score of learned and pious heralds of the cross on the platform, any one of whom could say a good word for Christ, or preach a gospel sermon good enough for any one of that multitude, and sufficient, with the divine blessing, to turn any sinner in the audience into the way of righteousness. But, no matter, if the Great Expected should happen not to get there, all the gospel represented on that platform could not make satisfaction to the disappointed and anxious multitude.

The service begins. There is a song, "Hold the Fort," or something equally devotional, reading of a Scripture lesson, prayer, and another, perhaps this time a real Christian hymn; all this, so far as the bulk of the congregation is concerned, only a "preliminary exercise," a getting in tune for the only thing the people came for, to see and hear the noted evangelist. "Is he not coming?" is the burden of that multitude of expectant souls. But as the last lines of the hymn are reached, the great man leaps

upon the platform, scans his audience, looks pleased, steps to the front, and reads his text.

But why did he not join in the devotional services? and where was he during that time? He was in some room behind the platform, gathering himself up, getting in mental trim, keeping himself fresh for the evening's effort, and letting the smaller fry (the D. D.'s and other clergy) attend to the hymns and prayers. The impression upon the audience is at once made that the devotional part of the service is more ornamental than useful, a sort of fringe or red tape to the sermon; else why would not the saintly evangelist join in it? The sermon, while containing many good and true things, is what might be expected of one who would presume to build on foundations laid by others on every square of the city. If St. Paul were to come to Philadelphia or Baltimore, he would hardly tarry more than a day or two, about long enough to pay his respects to the brethren; and then, great and eloquent apostle as he is, he would strike out for some godless region where Christ is not known, or at least where there is no church. We have the Apostle's own word for it. (Rom. 15: 20.)

But our modern evangelist does not believe in such old-fashioned notions. He goes where there is no foundation to lay, where the Church is established, and where houses of worship are on every hand. And, worst of all, he is encouraged by many ministers and their people.

All this belongs to the New Measure or Anxious Bench innovation. The miserable results should open the eyes of its advocates. Dr. Nevin saw through it all, and raised his voice against the whole system as contrary to the apostolic teaching and practice.

But the evangelist's sermon—and here the fundamental error of this system is laid bare. The greater part of the discourse, and of those which followed, was a harangue against faith in Church ordinances. He warned his hearers that they should, above all things, put no faith in baptism. "You can't be saved by baptism. I tell you, if you think baptism will save you, you may find out your mistake when it is too late. Why, if I believed that people were saved by baptism, you wouldn't catch me going over the country preaching. I would go through the streets with a bucket of water and douse every sinner I would meet, whether he wished it or not."

He would do like Charlemagne, who, in order to compel the Barbarians to become Christians, forced them into a river and had the baptismal formula pronounced over them.

“Yes,” continued the speaker, “if baptism saves, then stop building churches, close up your theological seminaries, let everybody be baptized, and we will then have the millennium, without the expense and labor that would otherwise be required. Now, mind, I am not speaking against the ordinances (sic!); they are all right in their place (sic!), but I don’t want you to depend on them for salvation.” And much more of the same sort.

All this shows that the pretended teacher of God’s Word had no true idea of the nature of the Christian Church as the body of Christ, and of the divinely ordained sacraments as channels for the communication of saving grace. In the most flippant style he set up a man of straw by presuming that multitudes of people hoped to be saved by having water poured over them, or by baptism without the subjective conditions of repentance and faith, and a corresponding life. Having set up his straw image, he displayed his heroism and iconoclastic zeal by bravely knock-

ing it down and scattering it to the winds. And the circle of Doctors and other clergy, and their adherents, showed by their smiles and other expressive signs that they were well pleased with the performance. This, now, is an example of the revival system that carried its head on high and affected superior piety which Dr. Nevin opposed at Mercersburg. The Reformed Church was in danger of being drawn into it and of losing her ancient churchly character, but God had given her a wise leader, and the danger was averted.

In the "Tract for the Times" Dr. Nevin set forth the positive as well as the negative aspects of the subject. Over against the frivolous Anxious Bench idea and methods is that which prevailed in the Church from the beginning, whenever ignorance and fanaticism did not interfere—namely the educational and sacramental system. The key-note of the true idea of personal salvation and true evangelism was struck by St. Peter on the day of Pentecost, in answer to the question, "Men and brethren, what shall we do." The men who asked this solemn question were not the kind of sinners modern revivalists make them out to be. Verily that second chap-



ter of the Acts has been about as badly handled and interpreted as could well be conceived. Those three thousand converts have been constantly spoken of by that class as sinners of the worst kind, and that their sudden conversion was in all respects like the conversion of notably wicked and profane men at a modern revival.

Let us see how that is by comparison. There is a "revival" in progress. No one thinks of being converted at the first service, or by the first of the series of sermons. No one goes to the anxious seat, or rises for prayers, or kneels at the altar the first night; nor the second, or third, usually. Why not? Because, it seems, all who have any intention of doing so, wait for some one else to make the start. This being done, others follow, and then what? That all depends on the character and style of the church or congregation. If it is composed of an ignorant class of people, there will be singing of exciting revival song, rant, confusion, and more or less demonstration by penitents. The meeting at some hour of the night closes; the penitents (there being as yet no converts) go to their homes, go about their business next day as usual, with apparent unconcern, and in the evening are back

again at the anxious bench ; and the same is repeated night after night, one after another meanwhile receiving the “ blessing ” from above, which is usually heralded by a shout, followed by the song : “ Good news gone to Canaan. ” How does that all compare with Pentecost ?

But suppose it is a “ fashionable ” church, the revival an ordinary one, and no union of churches under the lead of a professional evangelist—it will be outwardly different. The minister and leading members agree that Zion is languishing and that something must be done. The congregation needs reviving and sinners need conversion. The Winter is well advanced, the Christmas holidays (not observed in a Christian way, as that is deemed superstitious) are over, there has been a surfeit of high-toned social enjoyment, in which religion seemed to be rather out of place ; but now the church is awake to the necessity of getting up a religious interest, which it is resolved to do. The “ Week of Prayer ” is a good time to begin ; and the week being set apart by general appointment, there would be a good opportunity to slide into a protracted service without the appearance of “ forcing a revival. ” The preaching by the pastor is what may be termed

“good ;” the members look serious ; interesting people who are not in full communion, and other interesting people who are regarded as simply adherents, seem to be “impressed.” Invitations are daily given to such to attend the inquiry meeting, and after a week or so, some one is persuaded to make the start. Some others follow, and the local papers announce, “A revival in progress.” A neighboring minister of some reputation in revival work is called to the pastor’s assistance, and the work goes bravely on.

The preaching. In the first place all reference to the Holy Catholic Church as a divine institution of saving grace from Christ, the head, is studiously avoided. The sacraments are not mentioned. To preach about Church and sacraments would be regarded as throwing a wet blanket over the awakened religious interest and killing it outright. The doctrinal standards of the church hold in check any desire to declaim against the holy sacraments as in any real sense means of grace, but, what is no better, they are utterly ignored (during the revival) and treated with silent contempt. Everything for conversion and salvation here depends on the subjec-

tive state of mind, or feeling, resulting in a "change of heart," regarded as the new birth, as if this could be without the maternal intervention of the Lord's bride, the Church, with her divinely appointed means. And so the work continues and ends. Good is accomplished—some good, at least,—for even a one-sided gospel may produce partially good results, in some cases; but there must also be much evil resulting from it, for a partial truth, or a mixture of truth and error, can certainly not accomplish the full object of truth, pure and simple. The nearer we are to the truth, the nearer we are to Christ and the freedom that is in Him.

Now look at the gospel as presented in the second chapter of Acts. Here is a centre from which we may look in all directions. Of the day of Pentecost it can be truly said: "This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it." Ps. 118: 24. On that day the New Creation, as indicated by the Lord in Paradise, and foretold by the prophets, came full born into existence. It crowned and completed Christ's redeeming work, according to His own word, that the Comforter would come

and reveal all the mysteries of the gospel to His disciples, and that He would then fulfil His word, "I appoint unto you a kingdom, even as my Father appointed unto me, that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom : and ye shall sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." (Luke 22 : 29, 30.)

## CHAPTER VIII.

**The Contrast.**

The day of Pentecost was the birthday of the Christian Church, the kingdom spoken of in the above quotation ; and the account given of it in the second chapter of the Acts, contains, in its fundamental principles, the constitution of the one holy apostolic Church of Christ for all time. That the Church is of divine origin and constitution, is plain enough from Christ's words to the disciples concerning it, but here we have His words fulfilled : the scattered, uncertain and hesitating disciples now united into one mystical body by the eternal Spirit, and filled by that Spirit with the knowledge of heavenly things, and made to understand all the mysterious utterances of Christ when He was with them in the flesh. The receiving of the Holy Spirit was their baptism and ordination both in one, and they were now invested with the full powers of the apostolic office. They were ready now to fulfil their great commission from Christ to

preach the gospel, and administer the signs and seals of His grace.

There were gathered at that great Jewish festival—which on that day became the Christian Pentecost—Jews from all parts of the world. How gloriously and wisely God arranged matters in His kingdom of grace! The Old Testament passes into the New, and the New absorbs all the true elements of the Old. Christ, the author of the new creation, is its Head—for “He is the Head of the body, the Church,” and His ordained ambassadors represent His official presence in the Church on earth. Accordingly, Peter preaches the initial sermon, a sermon which contains the essential elements of the Christian salvation. The hearers are devout Jews, who had come to worship at the feast. It is evident they gave the closest attention to the sermon, as the result proves, and the most perfect order must have prevailed. Peter in his sermon did not inveigh against his hearers as if they were a morally bad set of men, but calmly, yet most forcibly, reasoned with them out of their own Scriptures, to prove that Jesus was the Christ. He told them, indeed, that by the hands of wicked men they slew Him of whom

their prophets wrote, but yet without a hint that they were consciously ungodly men ; that, as he afterwards said, in ignorance they did it, and that they would all obtain mercy, if they would now believe in Him whom they crucified as a malefactor. The sermon produced the effect that might be expected on men of devout spirit and reasonable minds. Without any unnatural excitement, but with sincere conviction of the truth as delivered by Peter, they inquired what they should do.

Now up to this point, what resemblance can be found between this whole scene and the modern revival as already described? There is none at all. In the first place the transactions on the day of Pentecost were of a nature not to be repeated in such form ; not any more than could the birth or the death of Christ be repeated. The Spirit was given and the Church was born once for all. The powers of the world to come were now lodged, complete and organized, in the new creation effected by the divine Spirit. It was the grand miracle of the ages, all the divine works of grace finding in it their glorious solution and meaning. It was the great new Sabbath day of the new spiritual world in which



Christ lives and reigns as head. In the second place the preaching of Peter was addressed to men who were in good and regular standing in the Old Testament Church, and in their way honest and devout; and in it was the design of God that these children of Abraham should be gathered in as the first fruits of the finished redemption. It was not then with them a case of sudden conversion after the modern revival order. It was the conviction, under the preaching of an inspired apostle, that Jesus was the Christ, which led those devout Israelites to Him and into His new-born Church.

But the answer of Peter to the question: "What shall we do?" The *question* implied that they were willing and ready to do whatever the apostles would direct. There is not the least sign here that those men thought only or chiefly of the punishment God might inflict on them for the rejection of His son. They were "pricked to the heart;" they realized the enormity of the sin which they had committed; but evidently it was the sin itself, and not the dread of punishment, that burdened their hearts; and it was release from sin and to be placed in right relations with God that they desired. The New

Measure system could not flourish at all with such people for mourners or inquirers.

The answer of Peter is plain, direct and simple, and of eternal significance. "Repent;" that is, change your mind with regard to Jesus, and accept Him as your Christ and Saviour. Love Him whom you formerly hated as a pretender and blasphemer; and then come into full communion and fellowship with Him and receive the remission of your sins and the new birth into His kingdom of grace; that is, "be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."

This they did. They were not told to get down on an anxious bench and endure spell after spell of mental torture until relieved by some divine influence. As for "law work," they had had enough of that under Judaism, and they now heard the glad sound of the Gospel.

According to the modern Puritanic Gospel it would be very dangerous to answer religious inquirers as St. Peter did, by telling them that baptism is for the remission of sins. But very likely Peter was right, and they are wrong.

Then the great apostle continued his answer :

“For the promise is unto you and your children.” The promise that God had made to Abraham, that He would bless him and his seed, is here renewed; and as little children under the old covenant were made members of the family of God by circumcision, so now they were not left out in the cold world. No, the little ones whom Christ took up in His arms and blessed are not to be denied the covenant blessings of the Gospel dispensation, “for of such is the kingdom of God.” And thus was the Christian Church established; not according to the varying moods of men, but according to the wisdom of God; not according to the spirit of our modern unhistorical and upstart sectism, but according to the spirit of truth, unity and peace. The Church was established as a family—the family of God—with all that such constitution implies, in which Christian households include all, from the oldest to the youngest, within their warm and loving embrace.

But modern revivalism practically ignores all this. The baptized children are classed among the uncovenanted children of the world, their baptism having no relation whatever to what is called their conversion. We might scarcely ex-

pect anything better of those sects whose ministers are as ignorant as the people whom they pretend to instruct, but the same is true of religious bodies that claim almost a monopoly of the brains and culture of Christendom.

Take the case of an eminent New England divine, a man of unquestioned learning and piety. He brought up his children in the most approved religious manner, and with the desired success. At a certain period in the history of this pious family a little son of eight years took ill and died. The reverend father bent over the dying child, his grief seeming to be controllable until his daughter, a girl of ten years, spoke such words of Christian consolation that his sorrow was almost turned into joy. The account says : " While her father and mother were weeping at the bed-side of the dying boy, the little daughter whispered into their ears words of peace and hope. Her conduct at such an hour was a restoring cordial to the wounded hearts of the parents, who found in the heavenly-mindedness of one child consolation for the loss of another." But now behold the sudden fall from the sublime to the ridiculous ; for thus the narrative proceeds : " Shortly after the death of this brother

Mary became in heart and life a Christian." What was she when, "heavenly-minded," she gave Christian consolation to her agonized parents? "She passed through that mysterious change which some denominate 'regeneration;' which *she* described by the expression, 'I have found God.'" Who and where was her God when she manifested so much Christian piety? But this is not all. Her father (too bad, after accepting her consoling ministry in a most trying hour) was unwilling that she should make a public profession of faith in Christ, for fear that after all she was not born again and truly converted. "He could not endure the thought that she should enter the Church (where was she up to that time—in the waste, howling wilderness?) without a saving evangelical change," and he would not have her "substitute the *sprinkling of water* for the baptism of Christ's blood."

Ah, there! the secret is out. The "heavenly-minded" child had been baptized in infancy, but the learned and pious father looked upon the baptism as only a "sprinkling of water," and a mere form empty as the wind. There was no grace in it that he could conceive of; it was to him an empty sign of what is of the highest mo-

ment, but obtainable only after many years, and after passing through a series of humanly prescribed mental horrors. In other words, the best of children, though baptized into Christ and pressed with His own arms to His bosom, are not Christians until they have passed through some such ordeal. Then what was the spiritual condition of that dying boy? and of that saintly sister whose "prudent" father waited long after that before he received her into the Church? What if Mary had died just before "she passed through that mysterious change which some denominate regeneration"—what would have been her condition after death? O thou heartless modern unchurchly and rationalistic Christianity, decked in the livery of superior piety and evangelicalism *par excellence!* to rob children of the divine covenant of the blessing which Christ imparted and declared was theirs! To deny baptism to children is bad enough; to grant it and then treat it as a mere form, without life or substance, is infinitely worse.

Now such was largely the state of things in the churches, whose early history should have taught them something far better, during Dr. Nevin's first three years at Mercersburg. The

nature of the Church, as clearly shown by the New Testament account of its organization, had been very much lost sight of. Every professional revivalist treated the second chapter of the Acts as simply an account of a big revival, like those of modern times. The real meaning and significance of the Christian day of Pentecost was almost unknown. Religion was regarded as a matter which every individual was to see to without regard to any mediating office in the Church—a false spiritualism which accepted baptism, but saw in it nothing but an outward sign of what could exist as well without it. The Lord's Supper fared no better in the general estimate. So *the Church*—the only conception of it was, the numerical sum of Christian believers joined together like grains of sand in a heap. How different the Church of Pentecost, as described by St. Paul: "By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body." (1 Cor. 12: 13.) What a mighty contrast between the Church as here presented and the abstract nothing of modern revivalism. The one is an object of faith, "the pillar and ground of the truth;" the other is a mere human conception, having the sacramental bonds without acknowledging their binding and saving virtue as divine means of grace.

In a similar way other portions of holy Scripture are treated by this class. They do not seem to know, for instance, that the apostolic Epistles were addressed only to Christian Churches. As a natural consequence the greatest mistakes are often made by preachers who select certain passages as texts for sermons to uncovenanted sinners, which were originally intended for Christian people only. I once heard a doctor of divinity preach from the text: "Quench not the Spirit." His entire address was to impenitent sinners (and he made no distinction between baptized and unbaptized), in which he maintained that all men had something of the divine Spirit in them, and Paul's exhortation was that they should not quench it. To prove his assertion that all men have the Spirit, he cited 1 Cor. 12: 7—"For a manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal"—and declared with great emphasis of voice and gesture that no other Scripture proof was necessary for the purpose. The ignorance displayed by that "doctor" was inexcusable and deplorable, and yet that is a fair sample of the kind of treatment the Bible receives at the hands of a very large number of



preachers. The passage has reference to Christians only, and occurs in a discourse on the nature and constitution of the Christian Church which may be regarded as a complete commentary on the second chapter of Acts. Indeed the whole idea of subjective emotionalism in religion is a perversion of the fundamental principles of the doctrine of Christ, which is, as He said to Nicodemus, not an emotion or "change of heart," but a new birth from above, and that by water and the Spirit, in order to any real citizenship in the kingdom of God on earth, and union with its head, Jesus Christ. The popular theology of fifty years ago had no real church consciousness, scarcely anything more than its perversion as sect consciousness, and sometimes not even that. As a consequence the Bible was either pressed into the special service of some favorite sectarian shibboleth, or used in a generally loose way, there being no proper sense of the great central principles of Christianity as formulated and focalized, for example, in the Apostles' Creed.

## CHAPTER IX.

**The Pilot Steers Straight.**

Dr. Nevin had got down to work at Mercersburg with a will. The Church question took hold of him and he took hold of it. It was a new experience, for up to that period in his life the subject had not been pressed at all in the religious circle in which he moved, except as referring to a denomination of Christians, or vaguely to the Church at large, with no special concern as to the doctrine of the holy Catholic Church of the Apostles' Creed. But he now found himself in a more free and open field of theological thought in the Reformed communion, and seeing that this Church was in danger of losing its identity by following in the ways of other denominations, and of losing all proper sense of the true idea of the Church as the body of Christ and the mother of all true believers, he carefully studied the subject on every side and in all its bearings, and then uttered his voice, in which there was no uncertain sound. He pub-

lished his famous work entitled "The Anxious Bench." It was like a bomb falling and exploding in a crowded camp. Dr. Nevin was not made after the manner of those who employ ambiguous phrases and conciliatory circumlocutions. He only needed to know that he was engaged in a good cause, and made no calculations, nor indulged anticipations, in regard to any result to himself. He wrote his "Tract for the Times," and sent it forth, as a true physician would prepare medicine and administer it without consulting the taste of the patient. In this instance heroic treatment was necessary, and there was no shrinking from the responsibility in the case.

The effect was tremendous. Notices and criticisms were like Autumn leaves in number. The Reformed Church as a whole applauded the work and its author to the echo. Even many who had been carried away on the wave of New Measureism hailed it as their deliverer from the whirlpool of false revivalism. Very few, if any, in the Reformed Church opposed the new book. It settled completely their minds on the question at issue.

In other Christian bodies there were varied

results. One part of the Lutheran Church condemned it, while another and larger part gave to it its unqualified endorsement. So of others. But, as was to be expected, the Tract was furiously assailed from various quarters. I well remember when, in my twelfth year, I read a violent rejoinder published as a counter-blast, in which the writer represented Dr. Nevin as in the bonds of Satan, and as his emissary, trying to overthrow the cause of true religion. This writer also expressed the hope that Dr. Nevin would see his error, and would himself bow at the anxious bench and be converted from the error of his ways. A Lutheran minister, whom I knew, employed his pen diligently for years against the book, using the most bitter language in characterizing it and its author. This same minister, a few years ago, publicly retracted every word he had uttered against Dr. Nevin and his Tract against the Anxious Bench, and declared it to be his firm conviction, after years of experience and careful study of the subject, that the Mercersburg Professor was right, and merited the gratitude of all right thinking men for the good he accomplished by his timely and

powerful utterances. Many others of that Church have given similar testimony.

The Tract itself, uncompromising as it was against the system which it attacked and showed that it had nothing solid on which to rest, did not breathe a word of contempt or dislike for the people who employed the modern innovation in evangelistic work. Its object was solely to advance the cause of truth; to show the better way; to tear down a false system, that the true one might be restored to its place; to open the eyes of the people, that they might behold Zion in its beauty and excellence; to set forth the true principles of Christianity; to explain the mysteries of the kingdom of God, as these are embodied in the heavenly mystery of Christ's Church. Dr. Nevin saw more and more that in American Protestantism current sentiment was running into rationalism and Pelagianism, unconsciously indeed, but nevertheless with sure tread in that fatal direction. To the unthinking, and to ordinary minds in general, no danger could be farther removed than that. American Puritanism professed to be spiritual above all other forms of Christianity. The contrast between it and what may be called the church-

liness of the older Protestant bodies was regarded as the contrast between spirituality and dead formalism. So it appeared to superficial observers, but on close inspection it is seen that genuine spirituality exists only where there is true and practical faith in the Church and her ordinances ; and that discounting the grace-bearing character and office of the Church and her sacraments is, so far, bowing to the demands of mere human reason. It is false spiritualism, that is in the end rationalism, and asks, like Nicodemus, "how can these things be?" Or, like some other Jews, "how can this man give us his flesh to eat?" Dr. Nevin exposed the error in all its magnitude, and made it descend with shame from the uppermost seat in the synagogue. It has scarcely succeeded since in getting back to its old place.

But it is not good to pull down, unless there is also a building up. Dr. Nevin did not stop with the negative business of exposing error. He pointed out the right way, and proclaimed positive truth. The Educational System, he maintained by unanswerable argument, was the only true one. To this the Reformed Church had been committed from her historical begin-

ning; to this he would bring her back, now that she seemed to be wavering, and he succeeded. He wakened up the sleeping consciousness of that old mother Church of the Reformation, and put her on the right road. May she never wander from it.

## CHAPTER X.

**True Evangelism.**

To evangelize or make disciples of all nations is the mission of the Church, committed by Christ to His apostles and their successors in the Christian ministry.

St. Paul says, "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God;" and the Heidelberg Catechism affirms this divine word by asserting that "the Holy Ghost works faith in the heart by the preaching of the Gospel, and confirms it by the use of the sacraments." And Christ, in the great commission, told the apostles to teach the disciples—the baptized—to observe all things that He had commanded them, with the promise that He would be with them to the end of the world.

Here we have in clear and unmistakable terms the authority for what is called the educational system of evangelism. According to it the authorities in the Church are authorized and obliged to set forth in right order the principles



of revealed truth, in due form, for the Christian training of children and all who need elementary religious instruction. Accordingly, from the beginning of Christian history there has been in the Church a class called catechumens, that part of a Christian community which is composed of the baptized children and youth, and others who may be seeking baptism and full admission into the Church. In early times it was a common thing for men and women of the highest standing, including princes and nobles, to attend catechetical instruction. This was the old apostolic system, which was regarded as essential in evangelical work by the entire Church, and has only been rejected within a comparatively recent period, not by the historical Church, but by ignorant upstart sects, and practically by denominations whose constitutions and regulations teach better things.

The educational system attaches to the very idea of Christianity and the Church. In what other way could there be promoted a healthy Christian life? What is there in religious excitement and spasmodic fervor and zeal without knowledge that is of permanent value? The Church cannot grow and bear the fruits of

righteousness by fits and starts, no more than things in the natural world, where, as Christ himself tells us, in speaking of the nature of His kingdom, there appears, "first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear." According to Christ, the apostles, all church history, and common sense, there is only one right method of evangelization—the educational.

Dr. Nevin had now made a fair and successful start as a public teacher and leader in the Church of his adoption. Instead of trying to lead his adopted Church over to the one from which he came—of which he never entertained a thought,—he labored to make the Reformed Church know herself and her glorious history, to consider well her position as a mother in Israel, her Catholic spirit and character, and her œcumenical symbol of faith, the Heidelberg Catechism. He warned her to be true to herself, and not be misled into strange ways by the pyrotechnic displays, stage performances and pietistic rant of mountebank revivalists. Then came from his powerful pen "The History and Genius of the Heidelberg Catechism," in which he continued the positive work of strengthening

the hands and hearts of those in whose special service he was called to labor.

In this work, as also in the extensive introduction to the Tercentary edition of the Catechism, and numerous other writings, Dr. Nevin exhibited the superior excellence of the Reformed Confession of Faith, and especially as having no equal as a method of instruction preparatory to confirmation. The amount of writing he did on the Catechism was sufficient of itself to give him literary fame; but it did much more—it awakened up the Reformed Church to a joyful sense of her true existence, and her true genius and mission. For this alone the Church owes him a perpetual debt of gratitude; and the very best way to pay the debt will be for all—ministers and laity—to read carefully what he wrote on their cherished summary of Christian doctrine. It will pay with interest every one who may have read them years ago to read them again; and those who have not yet become familiar with their contents, should not delay to form their acquaintance.

## CHAPTER XI.

**Dr. Philip Schaff.**

The impulse Dr. Nevin had received from association with Dr. Rauch was of great account to him and his work in the combined institutions of college and theological seminary. The first three years of his life in Mercersburg were a period of great mental activity and most important practical results. His introduction to the vast stores of German wisdom by his learned colleague was rapidly followed by intimate literary acquaintance with the land of ideas. He became a thorough German scholar and a master of German thought in the spheres of theology and philosophy, as was clearly proved by his literary productions. He was regarded as a master in Israel and a leader whom Reformed people could trust. No one envied him on account of his superiority, but all were proud, as inferiors, to sit at his feet and learn. He was the Gamaliel of the Reformed Church, and he became such by devoting himself and all the ener-

gies of his giant intellect and loving heart to the advancement of her people in Christian knowledge and virtue.

But it is not good for even the greatest men to be alone. Dr. Nevin enjoyed the companionship of the college professors, and that was of great account to him; and the friendships he had formed with congenial spirits in the Reformed ministry and laity, made him feel comfortable and at home; yet no one of these could fill the place of the lamented Dr. Rauch. He needed a colleague and a helper, one who could in a manner complement his own being, and *vice versa*, by mutual compensation each filling out what might be wanting in the other. After three years of this sort of loneliness there was a great change. The vacant place was filled by Dr. Philip Schaff.

Dr. Schaff, a professor in the great university of Berlin, was elected by the Reformed Synod of the United States, in October, 1843, Professor of Church History and kindred branches in the Seminary. He accepted the appointment, and began his labors in Mercersburg in the following year.

The new professor was young, only twenty-

five, yet he had already become distinguished even in the literary capital of the world. He was a man of profound and varied learning, and gave promise of a career which, then only seen through the mists of the uncertain future, is to-day known and read of all men, and is second to that of no other man in America. It was a happy day for Dr. Nevin when Dr. Schaff arrived at Mercersburg. The great loss of three years before was now made up, and the vacant place was again filled. Henceforth, if it pleased God, two great and congenial minds would work together in the great cause of Christian education. It was also the beginning of a new era in the life and work of Dr. Nevin.

Dr. Schaff prepared (and delivered in part) an inaugural address, which at once raised the highest public expectation in regard to him, and established his reputation for great talent and scholarly ability. The address was published in pamphlet form, with a very able and appreciative introduction by Dr. Nevin. It was a revelation of new and strange doctrines to many outsiders, but the membership of the Reformed Church had already been prepared by Dr. Nevin to hear such sentiments as were contained in the address,

and they were welcomed and applauded everywhere throughout her borders, with only a few individual exceptions.

The subject of the address was, "The Principle of Protestantism," in which true Protestantism was thoroughly sifted out of a mass of ill-grown notions, which had become moss-grown and fixed as the hills in the ordinary thinking of the American Church. A great cry was raised in Puritanic quarters against this new and sudden demonstration coming from the usually undemonstrative Reformed household, and hands were held up in holy horror at the idea of there being anything wrong, one-sided, or stupid, in the system of thought and doctrine which Puritanism had prescribed as the rule, law and testimony for the evangelical Church of America. There was considerable wringing of hands, and trembling for the ark; but all the same, the young lion roared, and it became tolerably certain that pseudo or false Protestantism had to yield up a considerable part of its sovereignty.

The two names, Nevin and Schaff, became closely linked together, in the minds of the people, like Alexander and Cæsar, or Clay and Webster.

How I remember Dr. Schaff's arrival from

Germany, when I was a boy of twelve years, and the lively conversations between him and my mother. Years afterwards, when I was one of his theological students, he frequently spoke of her, and of the pleasant and profitable conversations he had with her when he first came to America. The invariable form of greeting he sent to her was: "Give my love to your mother; she is such a smart old lady." Her Christian faithfulness in the training of her children, and her noble virtues, are my apology for alluding to her here.

Thus, in the providence of God, two men of extraordinary ability stood shoulder to shoulder at the head of the Reformed institutions of learning. They worked together in perfect harmony, and never consulted flesh and blood when they found it necessary for truth's and righteousness' sake to attack error in high theological places, and to weigh in the balances of truth and find wanting long cherished theologies and mummified theories of Christianity. They became disturbers of the long peace of the self-complacent, self-satisfied and groove-bound Puritanic theology, and broke the Rip van Winkle slumber and conceit of the negative Protestant-



ism that was unconsciously going to seed. They fearlessly proclaimed that true Protestantism and true Christianity were not to be judged and measured by opposition to Romanism, but by the standard of positive truth as contained in the Word of God and formulated by the Church in her œcumenical creeds. In the popular Christianity of the time there was no real sense of an objective order and kingdom of saving grace. Between the subject and God there was supposed to be nothing. The Church, as visible, was regarded simply as a convenience; and as invisible, a mere abstraction: and the sacraments, symbols only of what could exist as well without them. So also Christ himself was regarded as chiefly a legal instrument brought into existence as a divine after-thought through the accidental fact of sin—a pivot on which to turn the scale of justice and effect human deliverance from the consequences of guilt. Salvation was viewed as the result of a commercial or governmental scheme, in which there was a scrupulous balancing of book accounts between God and the sinner; and these being fairly adjusted, there followed God's imputation of righteousness, which righteousness belonged solely to

Christ, however, and was merely set down to the sinner's credit as if his own, though in no sense his own in reality. Then again the very opposite of all this was virtually taught by the same prevailing Puritanic school. Instead of the mechanical legal arrangement, there was insisted upon as a prime condition of salvation a powerful soul struggle, an inward subjective contention, in which faith played scarcely any part at all, a wrestling as in a night-mare to get away from the spot over which hung the sword of divine justice, or, in common phrase, to "flee the wrath to come;" and at last coming out of all this conflict with flying colors and with the self-complacency of a hero to whom was due all the glory of the victory.

In all this the Church as the body and bride of Christ, and as "the pillar and ground of the truth," was systematically ignored.

Dr. Schaff, having Dr. Nevin at his side, was not long in learning what was the state of the American Church and the reigning spirit of Puritanism with its lofty claims and shallow pretensions. He and his powerful colleague pricked the stupendous bubble, and it has been collapsing ever since.

## CHAPTER XII.

**A Review.**

Before the arrival of Dr. Schaff, Dr. Nevin had performed single-handed an immense amount of work for the Church. He had laid a foundation for the future that was broad and deep.

He diligently and conscientiously studied the great questions in theology and philosophy, and the social problems that pressed on his attention, and gave the results to the Church and to the world.

His inaugural address, on the nature and importance of the Christian ministry, was a most thorough and solemnly earnest presentation of the divine office. It produced a profound impression, and also settled permanently the question as to the wisdom of the Synod in choosing him to be the chief teacher in the Church.

His love for the German language and high regard for the German people, who constituted a considerable part of the Reformed family in America, was soon perceived and appreciated.

He made a trip through Eastern Pennsylvania to see the country and become better acquainted with the German speaking people. He was both surprised and delighted with what he saw. Not only was the country through which he travelled of surpassing beauty and fertility of soil, but he saw on every hand fine church buildings and school houses, and discovered, through free intercourse with many of the people, that they had in them the timber to make men of the highest character and quality.

During that pleasant journey he had occasion to make practical use of his knowledge of the German language. I remember how I heard of it when I was a boy, and helped to discuss it at the family hearth, and how strange we thought it would seem to hear one, who had just recently been a Scotch - Irish American Presbyterian divine, preach in the German language. But it was so. The sermon was actually delivered, and that Berks county congregation has the honor of hearing the only German sermon ever preached by the greatest theologian in America. No doubt many who heard that sermon are still living and have a lively recollection of the effort of an "Irisher" trying to adapt his tongue to the

peculiar flexions and idioms of their language. I confess, I heartily envy the men and women now living who heard that sermon.

Dr. Nevin returned from his Eastern tour with fresh zeal in behalf of his Anglo-German Church. And the more he learned of the American German people, the more he admired their simple virtues and character; and he bent himself to the work of elevating them to the position to which they had the natural capacity to attain. And since that day many a grand and noble living statue has been created by that master hand out of the unpolished material in the German sections of the State.

During this period Dr. Nevin wrote a great deal for the Reformed "Messenger" on such topics as he believed required special attention, all which was read with the greatest avidity. He also lectured to the students—or rather, he delivered an address—on a special occasion, on the German language, in which he showed the marvellous power and flexibility of that queen of modern tongues, and recommended its thorough study. The address was proof of its author's complete mastery of the German language, and it would be profitable for the present generation to look it up and read it.

One of the most important of Dr. Nevin's productions during this period was at its close, and may be said to mark the transition to the next: I refer to his "Sermon on Catholic Unity," preached at the Triennial Convention of the two Reformed Churches, and published with an English translation which he made of Dr. Schaff's "Principle of Protestantism."

This sermon is proof positive that Dr. Nevin was no church partisan, and that he was as far removed from sectarian bigotry as the poles are from each other. He rejoiced in the name Reformed, not because it designated a certain division in the Lord's army, but because it represented, in name and historical fact, catholicity, unity, charity.

It was not uncommon at that time, or ever since, to hear utterances on Christian unity. Many of both clergy and laity have used voice and pen to promote it, and no doubt with sincerity. But generally there has been a painful lack of the true idea and conception of such unity. Many practical attempts have been made in this direction in the way of joining forces in evangelistic work, or in conventions where leaders and people have met in right good fel-

lowship, and a momentary enthusiasm has taken hold of the assembly. Unfortunately much of the union sentiment about which we hear a great deal is not the genuine article, and has little of the spirit of that church unity which was the burden of our Lord's intercessory prayer, and the subject of many an apostolic discourse, as we can see in the epistles of St. Paul. There have been plenty of union talkers who would catch at every opportunity to make proselytes for their own sect from the very bodies about whom they would say fine things at union meetings. I have a distinct recollection of a "union effort" in one of our large Pennsylvania towns, about twenty-five years ago. Its object, as declared, was "to take the town" by a mighty shoulder to shoulder effort, in which all the evangelical Churches were expected to join, especially the ministers and leading members. There was to be a weekly union prayer meeting, regular meetings for conference, and general union services, in which all were expected to take part.

I state here as an historical fact that the most enthusiastic of the leaders of that movement were men who, as events proved, were the most

eager to swell the ranks of their membership at the expense of the dear sister churches of the town.

But the Reformed pastor did not join in the union effort, as he thought all his time should be devoted to the interests of his large parish ; and, besides, he had no faith in any good likely to come of it. He thought, if all the pastors would do their duty among their own people, it would be far better. As for himself, there is not to be found one more faithful than he in all pastoral work. He was on the most friendly terms with his ministerial brethren of the town, and was universally regarded as singularly free from sectarian bigotry, and would be the last person in the world to move a finger toward increasing his church by encroachments on a neighboring pastor. He was aggressive, going beyond the limits of his pastoral charge, and frequently brought in men from the world, but never from any other orthodox branch of the Church. In fact, he made more conquests in this way than any other pastor in the place. When the union movement started up, the Reformed pastor refused to join in it, and was freely criticised and even denounced by his good brethren for his



negative course in the matter. At some of the union meetings he was loudly prayed for, that the scales might fall from his eyes, and that he might be made to see the glory of the Lord as manifested in the united effort of God's people to advance His kingdom and save precious souls—but all to no purpose. The meetings continued many weeks, and as there is an end of all such things here below, so there was an end to this. Then came a dividing of the spoils. Then he who imagined himself to be the lion, thought he should have the lion's share. Then there was a quarrel between the two that were biggest; then a newspaper fight. Then the less distinguished of the evangelic leaders got into the fight; and then, of course, the rank and file followed, divided into as many bands as there were sectarian interests at stake. Then outsiders (the poor sinners) looked on and chuckled, thinking they were about as good as these fighting parsons and their adherents. Then the "converts" began to doubt whether after all there was anything in "religion," and gradually they relieved themselves of any further trouble about it by falling into their old ways and to the world. Then, after the newspaper war was ended

(the editors, after long endurance, had to shut down on the disgraceful scrimmage), sensible people began to see that there can be Christian unity without such forced admixture and commingling; that the several parts of a unity can best perform their functions in their own way and separately, and that *the spirit* of unity and peace is the principal thing. *Then*, after that colossal union effort, it was seen that the Reformed pastor had accomplished more in the way of true evangelism than all the rest put together; had not brought scandal on the ministry or compromised Christianity itself; was respected by all sensible people, and was at peace with all. He had carefully read and studied Dr. Nevin's sermon on Christian unity, was in full accord with it, and at all times endeavored to practise its precepts.

Dr. Nevin's sermon was not then a sentimental plea for great union demonstrations in any shape or form, but for the true Christian spirit of unity as inculcated by Christ and the Apostles. There cannot be a true sentiment on this subject, however, without a true Church spirit and correct views in regard to the Church itself. "There is one body, and one spirit, even

as ye are called in one hope of your calling : one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all" (Eph. 4: 4-6), and this was the text on which the sermon was based. The organic unity of God's people is there clearly affirmed, as also in many other places. "One Lord, one faith, one baptism"—"one body and one spirit"—one holy Catholic Church, whose Head is Christ, and whose spiritual life is from Him. A right apprehension of this great truth is necessary to promote the "unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace."

As the Church actually exists, divided into separate ecclesiastical bodies or denominations, the full expression of catholic unity is wanting ; that is, the New Testament ideal, in which all Christians "with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 15: 6), is not now realized. Then all the more reason for considering the question as it confronts us and forces itself upon our attention, in view of the lamentable and senseless divisions in the Church, in face of the high priestly prayer: "That they all may be one ; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us." (John 17 : 21.)

Dr. Nevin in this sermon showed the importance of cultivating the spirit of Christian unity as an essential principle in a practical godly life. We cannot get away from the denominational system at once, but the way may be prepared for outward unity by coming more and more to a true sense of what the Church really is as the body of Christ, and what the truth concerning the Church involves, and especially by bearing practical testimony to the truth contained in this article of the Christian faith, life and action corresponding with the profession: "I believe in the holy Catholic Church; the communion of saints."

Dr. Nevin being a public teacher in the Reformed branch of the Church catholic, was true to her interests; but what did he consider her interests to be? Did he believe her right position was that of a rival to other branches of the Church, and that his high mission would be accomplished if he could place her in the lead? That was far from his thought; he knew of nothing of interest to his denomination, except what pertained to the Church universal; and that her sole object in all her activities should be the glory of Christ, the Head of the whole

Body, and the salvation of all men. Since in the Providence of God we belong to different branches of the one Church, our Christian life and works must be in one of them; yet we should at the same time rise in thought and affection far above the partial and sectional, even to the heaven-born, white-robed bride of the Lord, all glorious within, and without spot or blemish.

The sermon on catholic unity was a grand postscript to the English edition of Dr. Schaff's *Principle of Protestantism*. It may be said to be the entering wedge of Dr. Nevin's numerous contributions on the Church question which followed, the forerunner of perhaps the most remarkable and powerful discussions of that period. Webster once said of Hamilton: "He struck the rock of the national resources, and the abundant stream of revenue gushed forth." Dr. Nevin smote the rock wherein were hid too long some of the richest treasures of theology, and the abundant streams of Gospel light gushed forth. His foundation was Christ and His Church, as embracing in a living, organic form the whole truth of the Gospel. He looked no longer to any abstract doctrine as the centre and starting

point in theology, but to Christ Himself as the principle and source of all truth, and the Church as the organ of His saving grace and holding the Word of divine revelation, committed to her care as the leaves of the Tree of Life for the healing of the nations. "This is a great mystery; but I speak concerning Christ and the Church." (Eph. 5: 32.) The Lord's bride, His mystical body, the mother of all true believers.

Dr. Nevin's earnest and profound looking into this glorious mystery of Christ and the Church produced in his mind the most practical ideas and inferences. The truth concerning the Church, her catholicity, unity and holiness, enjoined upon every member the duty of maintaining, according to the grace given to each one, the spirit of unity and peace.

He also saw in the Reformed communion a broad field for the free and unobstructed working out of all the theological problems that demanded solution, and for the development of theological science from that fountal principle of Christianity—Christ and the Church.

## CHAPTER XIII.

## A Ten Years' War.

The next ten years in the life and work of Dr. Nevin were, in many respects, or altogether, the most important period in his extraordinary career. It was for him a decade of hard work, learned and earnest controversy, and the erection of a theological structure against which no opposition has yet prevailed—a monument to his memory more enduring than granite or brass.

If there could be erased from the printed page and from the tablets of memory the records of that period in the life of Dr. Nevin,—or, rather, if the facts in the case had never existed,—there would be a great historical vacuum in the world of mind, and a condition far below that which now exists.

Theological science was confined at that time in America to fixed limits, and was run in grooves made and cut in some approved fashion, and was expected to show its loyalty by never for a moment leaving its appointed track. There

were several varieties of popular theology, which sometimes on meeting would show an amount of polemical activity and zeal worthy of the best cause. Calvinism and Arminianism, on occasions, would outdo political partisanship itself in fierceness of controversy. The points of difference were only points, but they were sharp, and when used as missiles it was sometimes not eminently wholesome to be within range. How we used to hear from Arminian pulpits the unmusical changes rung on the dreadful five points of Calvinism, until the five points seemed like five horns of some horrible apocalyptic monster ; to all which Calvinists would reply with equal severity. Orthodoxy (which generally meant faith in some doctrinal hobby) was, in the popular estimation, the Church, and the Church in any other view was an object of suspicion. To talk about the Church as a visible kingdom of divine grace, and about religion as more than a mental and spiritual state, as holding in the body of Christ, the Church, in connection with her sacramental energies and life forces, would imply a dangerous departure from true spirituality, which must hold away as far as possible from religious forms, and use them only because there



seems to be a divine command to do so. As for the rest, every one's subjective states must be for him gospel, religion, Church and all. And religion being altogether subjective in its nature and essence (a sort of mode of motion), why should any special account be made of Church and sacraments? If religion is the result of a spiritual coming out of Egypt, of a trembling beneath the thunderings and lightnings of Sinai, or a wrestling, like Jacob with God, of an arrest in the mad career of sin, and three days' blindness, as in the case of Saul, then what has the *Church* to do with it? The Church is a very proper place for people after they have become full-fledged Christians, but the new birth, with all that it implies (no matter what the confessions of faith say), must take place on the outside. Thus writes a minister of the Gospel (a college and seminary graduate) to a brother seeking Christian counsel :

“I suppose you could live a Christian life without joining the Church ; but in that case you would not be fully recognized as a Christian. There would be doubt in the minds of some concerning your conversion, as it is expected of converts that they profess their faith in

Christ publicly. Then, too, your old companions may still regard you as one of them, so long as you are not formally united with God's people, and will the less hesitate to invite you to their resorts. If you join the Church, your new course of life and refusal to take part in sinful practices will not create surprise, for even sinners take note of consistency and admire it. I earnestly advise you then to unite with the Church—not that there is any virtue or essential benefit in such act itself, but because of the advantages you would secure by so doing.”

This is a fair sample of the false views concerning the Church as held by large and influential bodies of American Christians when Dr. Nevin at Mercersburg rapped them to order, and called them to account. Then he took his stand for the old Church doctrine and exposed the shallow pretensions of the reigning Puritanic theology. It was no small task he took in hand. The prevailing sentiment was against him, especially outside of the Reformed and parts of a few other denominations.

The literature of the Sunday schools was generally of the most unchurchly character, much of it teaching sentimental morality without any

positive Christian truth, and never a word about Church and sacraments. Here is an example of the teaching in the especially solemn kind of Sunday school books :

Helen Jones, a young lady belonging to a Christian family, and carefully brought up after the most approved Puritanic fashion, received an invitation to a party. She was sternly advised by a severely prudent aunt not to go. But as the young lady thought she would enjoy the party and its innocent diversions, she went. The exposure to the cool night-air on the way home was followed by an attack of pneumonia, causing her death after an illness of one week.

During this time there was no lack of spiritual doctors who undertook her case and prescribed the remedies which seemed to be needed. She was made to understand, first of all, that her illness was a divine judgment for having attended a social party against the godly advice of her pious aunt (though with the consent of her equally pious parents), and that she was therefore a terrible sinner. These casuistical doctors then produced their nerve-racking medicines and poured them into the soul of the young sufferer. She must atone for her sins

(they will tell her about Christ later on—never mind) by a repentance concerning the reality of which there must be no doubt; she must realize the horrors of the damned, that she may know the full extent of her guilt; that only then she will be released by a gracious God from the power of His anger, for the sake of Christ who paid her debt on condition that she first pass through the terrors of an accusing conscience, and have a taste in this world of the death which never dies. Such, and much more of the same kind, was the medicine administered to a tender soul when the body was racked with pain. But in this case, at least, the strong New England spiritual drugs failed to produce the desired effect. The young lady, after the mental terrors produced by the awful remedies had subsided, became wonderfully calm and resigned—but, alas! resigned to what she believed to be her awful fate. She sent for some of her young friends, and with the calmness of despair addressed them on the importance of religion, and of preparation for death and eternity. As for herself, she said it was too late; that she was lost, lost forever; but she wished before she died to warn her surviving companions against delay in the most

important of all matters. She had hoped that she was a Christian, but discovered too late that she was not. "When I am gone," she said, "think of miserable Helen, and strive to enter in at the strait gate of life immortal. Make religion your chief concern, and do not waste a moment in the indulgence of the fleeting pleasures, such as I pursued a week ago, and which have brought me to this dreadful condition, the loss of my soul." And with many more words of like character she exhorted those around her. Now who would not say that the dying girl, deceived, mocked and terrorized by such "miserable comforters," was a better Christian than they all?

Such abominable stuff I was reading by day and dreaming about in the night watches, when Dr. Nevin began the work of driving out such traders from the Lord's temple. And of this general character was the greater part of our American Sunday school literature at that time. Through its influence religion was looked upon as a miserable and doleful necessity, as a nauseating dose, a nostrum that was kill or cure, which prudence would advise to accept, not for its own sake, but as a remedy against what is worse (perhaps!) than the horrid remedy itself.

Here was one of the errors in religion which Dr. Nevin laid low during the ten years' war.

There was also in the reigning popular religious thinking what may be called ultra Protestantism, distinguished by extreme and fanatical hatred of Roman Catholicism. A man's Protestantism was gauged by the length he could go in abusing and vilifying that faith. Such was the general Protestant teaching on that subject, that Roman Catholics were either pitied on account of the certainty of their dreadful doom, or thoroughly hated. It was allowed by some that here and there were good Christians among Romanists, but they were the few exceptions, and were Romanists only in form and not in reality. Dr. Nevin could not possibly take a comprehensive view of the truths he was under solemn obligation to teach, without seeing and attacking the falsehood and errors which lay in that direction. The results to himself he never weighed or considered. He was concerned only for the truth, and never stopped to consider the commotion that would be raised against himself, or any other result, knowing that "truth is mighty and shall prevail."

Then there was another class of people that

he had to encounter—the High Church Episcopalians, whose lofty pretensions about “apostolic succession,” and other exclusive ecclesiastical prerogatives and claims, he knocked into smithereens.

Then he undertook the task also of presenting to the Church and to the world the true Reformed doctrine concerning the Lord’s Supper, which he did in the ablest work ever written on the subject. This, too, helped to continue the ten years’ war.

Then the two opposite poles of Protestantism—that is, High Church Episcopalianism and Puritanism—each claimed to be the exact copy of the ancient Church, and connected with it by a relationship that was indisputable, an exact reproduction in every respect—an odd claim, surely! But Dr. Nevin proved that both parties were color blind, and therefore no judges in the case at all. He spoiled their pretty dream so completely that the queer fable has scarcely been repeated since. But the writings in which he settled forever the two claimants, became for other reasons a target for arrows of every description.

Then came his powerful plea for Protestantism ; and this time it was a distinguished Roman Catholic that contended with him.

But we must take up this period, briefly, in detail, the whole history of which would fill volumes.



## CHAPTER XIV.

**A Speck of War.**

The conflict was inevitable. Cherished theories and opinions, of long growth, cannot be assailed without causing antagonism. Drs. Nevin and Schaff had no desire to stir up strife and contention among Christian people, but they were charged with the duty of teaching truth, which they determined to do, if necessary, at the expense of personal comfort and repose, and of the peace which may be, after all, only a cover under which Satan finds protection in his assaults upon the Church of Christ.

Though the Reformed clergy and laity almost unanimously endorsed the teachings of the Mercersburg professors, there were still a few who opposed them. Among these was the Rev. Dr. Berg, pastor of the Race Street Reformed church in Philadelphia. He was a man of ability, a fine pulpit orator, quick and sharp in debate, and a born controversialist. He edited a religious journal called the "Protestant Banner,"

in which the most ultra Protestantism was maintained and the Roman Church represented in its very worst features. Dr. Berg wrote and lectured against Romanism, and was one of the great leaders in this country in opposition to the Church of Rome, which was freely designated as "the harlot," "the man of sin," "the scarlet woman." With Dr. Berg were several other ministers and a few prominent laymen, who thought they did special service to the cause of truth by doing all in their power against the Roman Catholic Church. They affected great horror of such Romish tenets as "works of supererogation," "penance," and the "meritoriousness of good works," but they certainly seemed to think that Protestants who were specially zealous in fighting Rome, would be specially rewarded at the Great Assize, if not sooner. With many people the hatred of Romish doctrines is very much modified by "the way the wind blows." Nevertheless, deducting all rebates and discounts, Dr. Berg and his co-believers were thoroughly and irreconcilably dead set against popery.

It could not then be expected that they could by any possibility be silent, especially Dr. Berg,

when he was informed that Dr. Nevin was teaching that the Roman Catholic Church was part of the Church of Christ. The charge itself was a true bill, and Dr. Nevin did not deny it, but re-affirmed and sustained the truth of it by argument, when the subject was brought to his attention. Dr. Berg had made an attack upon him, charging him with defection and surrender to the great enemy of true religion, and of being false to his trust as a teacher in a Reformed seminary. Dr. Nevin replied in several articles in the "Messenger," headed "Pseudo-Protestantism," in which he showed that it was very bad Protestantism to affirm that the Roman Church was no Christian Church at all, and that her sacraments and ordinances were without validity, thus consigning that immense body of professing Christians to the world and the devil. The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church having thus affirmed by a formal deliverance, Dr. Charles Hodge, of the Princeton Theological Seminary, and everywhere regarded as a prince in the Presbyterian Church, was exceedingly mortified and disgusted by what he regarded as an outrageous declaration, thus agreeing fully with Dr. Nevin on that point. Why imitate

the Roman Church in hurling anathemas? She will have much to answer for on that score; but bad and corrupt as are some of her doctrines and practices, she is still entitled to consideration as a Christian Church, fully as much so as many of the numerous sects that ignorantly prate about their own virtues, as if truth and godliness were confined almost exclusively to themselves. Dr. Nevin was blamed for not anathematizing the Roman Catholics, and he did not deny the truth of the accusation. His charity extended to all, and he rejoiced in finding truth anywhere; and while he denounced the errors, he at the same time acknowledged whatever of truth there was in the system of Romanism. He would have been false to his high trust, if he had taught otherwise.

His answer to Dr. Berg on this subject was complete, satisfactory to all who were not blinded by prejudice, and a final settler once for all.

But there was another charge. He was accused of teaching that Christ is really, though spiritually, present in the Lord's Supper. Another accusation, the truth of which he would not deny, but in his answer to Dr. Berg fully admitted that he so taught. He here took occa-

sion to present the true historic Reformed view of the Lord's Supper; that it was not Roman Catholic (Transubstantiation), nor Lutheran (Consubstantiation, so-called, though not by Lutherans), nor Zwinglian, that is, the memorialistic view (though Zwingli was much nearer the truth on this subject than his detractors would admit), but *Calvinistic*, which teaches that the Lord's Supper is a real means or channel of grace to the true communicant; that Christ is really, though spiritually, present in it, and that the Christian believer receives in the sacrament the body and blood of Christ, after a heavenly manner, as his true spiritual meat and drink. Again Dr. Nevin held his ground and convinced the Church that he was right. He was at Mercersburg not to be used as a thing of wax, allowing himself to be shaped and controlled by the sentimental theology of the day, but to guide the grand old historic Church in the King's highway—and he did it.

This periodical controversy led to the preparation by Dr. Nevin of the work on that subject, entitled "The Mystical Presence," without any question the greatest work on the Lord's Supper that has ever been written. It was so regarded

in England by its greatest theologians, and also in Germany, the land where theology and philosophy grow and thrive like tropical plants.

According to the popular American Puritanic idea of Christianity and practical religion, the sacraments are nothing more than outward signs, or representations, pictures, of what can and does exist without them. They think it is proper to use them, but that they belong only to the necessary outward forms of religion, and do not immediately, only incidentally, affect its inward life. Where the baptism of infants is allowed, it is more because of venerable custom, or of custom that it may not be well to abolish, than because of the ancient and true Christian sentiment that by baptism children, as well as adults, become members of Christ, that though outward and visible, there is in it divine spiritual grace, and that it seals the transfer of the subject from the realm of fallen human nature into the kingdom of God. Consistently the Lord's Supper, though regarded with greater solemnity, perhaps, is viewed in the same way. The participation of the believer in Christ's flesh and blood, and the Scripture terms used to express it, are regarded as figures of speech, meaning

thereby nothing more than a proper spiritual frame of mind of one who would hold spiritual fellowship with Christ. That is, there is supposed to be nothing in the sacrament but what men put into it by whatever state of mind they come to it ; not therefore in itself a divine channel of grace appointed for that end, but simply a something superadded as an indication or sign that the grace is present, or an act performed in memory of what Christ did for men eighteen centuries ago.

This was not the Church doctrine as represented by the Heidelberg Catechism and other Reformed confessions. Dr. Nevin planted himself squarely on these, and on the teaching of the New Testament, when he began to move his vigorous pen against the modern doctrinal innovations that threatened to turn Christianity and the Church as organized by Christ and centering in Him, into a spiritualistic dream or fiction. His controversy with Dr. Berg, in which he was easily victorious, and fully sustained by the Church, was the occasion, in part, of his preparing the great work, "The Mystical Presence."

## CHAPTER XV.

**The Book.**

The two productions, Schaff's "Principle of Protestantism" and Nevin's "Mystical Presence," may be regarded as the foundation or substratum of what became known as "Mercersburg Theology." In these were laid down and clearly defined the great principles of the Christian religion, which these learned and earnest theologians developed and unfolded as time rolled on. In the "Mystical Presence" Dr. Nevin entered the inmost sanctuary of Christ's kingdom on earth, the Holy of Holies of God's spiritual temple. For such is the position of the Lord's Supper in the spiritual world in which Christ lives and reigns. "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth," is the song of men and angels that fills with its swelling notes this inner sanctuary of our Redeemer God.

This book is called "A Vindication of the Reformed or Calvinistic Doctrine of the Holy Eucharist," and the work itself is a most thor-



ough vindication of its title. It is not a large work, a duodecimo of about 250 pages, including over 40 pages of an Introduction, which is a free translation of a German monograph by Dr. Ullman of Heidelberg, Germany. And yet, though many larger works had been written on the same general subject, it is doubtful whether all taken together would compare in fullness and value with this remarkable production. It is undoubtedly the classic without a peer or rival on the subject to which it relates.

The book created a sensation in theological circles. By far the most important notices and reviews of it came from two theological headquarters—Erlangen, in Germany, and Princeton, in America, by Dr. Ebrard and Dr. Hodge. The review of the work by Dr. Ebrard was exhaustive and learned, as might be expected of one of the ablest theologians and scholars of Europe, and a full endorsement of Dr. Nevin's views. The book was to him an agreeable surprise, coming from America, the land of practical ideas, Yankee notions, and all the odds and ends of religious belief. Dr. Nevin was at once elevated in the mind of Germany as the representative of its best thought and culture. From

henceforth he belonged to the Old as well as to the New World. He was too broad and free in his ideas to be hedged in by geographical or ecclesiastical walls. He was familiar with the past and present in their relation to all questions, whether sacred or secular, and he knew how to separate truth from error in both. He knew the state of theological and kindred questions of the time throughout Christendom, and gathered them all within the comprehensive grasp of his prodigious mind.

On the other hand an unfavorable verdict was rendered by a judge in the American Israel, Dr. Charles Hodge, of Princeton. He was a leading representative of the reigning Protestantism of this country, a man of high character and extensive learning, but hedged and controlled largely by what had become regarded in America as the *Ultima Thule*, or utmost limit of Christian science and knowledge, the modern theology that claimed to be the most ancient, the most Biblical, the most orthodox and evangelical. The "Mystical Presence" did not meet his approval, albeit that it was professedly a "vindication of the Reformed and Calvinistic view of the Lord's Supper." But the American

Presbyterian Church, while maintaining and defending the less defensible "five points of Calvinism," had about forgotten the great Reformer's views on the sacraments. The Puritanic inquisitorial view of regeneration and conversion, with its frowning legalism, hair-splitting casuistical conditions of salvation, and the practical outcome of it all, seemed in such sharp contrast with the new book that Dr. Hodge was much annoyed by the threatened disturbance of the general peace. There was a murmur of dissent pretty much along the whole line, but the mere fact is all that needs to be here noticed. The review by Dr. Hodge, however, was of some importance, though on account of his deep-seated predilections he was not in proper mind to treat the subject with the judicial fairness that would naturally be expected from a man of his character and ability. He attempted to prove that Dr. Nevin in his views on the Lord's Supper had departed much farther from the early Church and the Protestant Reformation than those whom he accused of such departures. But Dr. Nevin successfully answered the charge and worsted his antagonist as completely as such a thing was ever done in all the history of theo-

logical controversy. He had thoroughly and conscientiously studied his subject and mastered it, and as usual made his position impregnable. He gained a complete victory for Christianity by thus rescuing from the domination of pietistic cant and false spiritualism the true apostolic doctrine of the holy Eucharist, the very heart of Christian life and worship.

I shall not attempt to present anything like a review of the "Mystical Presence" in this brief sketch of Dr. Nevin's life, and will therefore only state a few of its main points, in a general summing up of the argument, with the hope of creating the desire to procure and read the great work itself. It is pre-eminently a *multum in parvo*, a body of divinity containing more solid theology than many a large and pretentious theological treatise. It has been so regarded by the most eminent men of England, Germany and America; and this work alone made the name of its author famous throughout the world.

What is the true historical Reformed doctrine of the Holy Eucharist? What is the New Testament doctrine as represented by the Reformed Church?

In the first place, Christ established and

organized what is called His Church, consisting of all who believe in Him and have the sacramental seal of His saving grace, that is, who have been baptized into Him. This means a transfer from the old creation in Adam to the new creation in Christ, not in dramatic representation or emblem merely, but in reality. These subjects of God's grace and fatherly goodness constitute His family on earth, and it is His good pleasure that they be faithful unto death and receive the crown of life.

The work of human redemption was full and complete only when the Spirit of the Father and the Son had performed His great work on the day of Pentecost in the founding and organization of the Church. The giving of the Holy Spirit to the disciples was their baptism into the triune mystery of the Godhead, and they became members of the Lord's family. The same day the family was increased from people of the old covenant. These were added by the same baptism of the Spirit, but, in accordance with Christ's appointment, water became the medium of the Spirit's operation, which could not be in the first instance, there being no human administrator, not until the first disciples had received

directly from heaven the baptism of Christ. Then the apostles, having been baptized and ordained by the Spirit directly from above, were first officially qualified and authorized to administer the signs and seals of the new covenant to those who sought its blessings.

St. Peter said to the men who inquired what they should do : “ Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost ; for the promise is unto you and your children.” Therefore, as in the words of the Nicene Creed : “ We confess one baptism for the remission of sins.” Accessions to a family are by natural birth ; so also the family or Church of God is increased by a new spiritual and heavenly birth. By natural birth we are under the dominion of sin and Satan, according to our relation to the first and sinful Adam ; by the new birth we come into the kingdom and under the dominion of Christ, the Second Adam, the kingdom of divine grace, of deliverance from sin, of salvation. The first fruits of the Christian Pentecost were baptized into Christ, were united thus to Him as their living head, were born again, of water and the Spirit, and received the remission of their sins.

Now these same disciples, new-born children of God, did not fail to use the means of Christ's appointment for their growth in Christian grace and virtue. "They continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in the breaking of bread, and in prayers." It is easily seen here that the relation of baptism to the Lord's Supper is that of birth to development or growth. And there is as much reality in the one as in the other.

The sacrament of the Lord's Supper, solemnly instituted by Himself, and always treated by the apostles as the climax of the whole Christian cultus, is surely a most important subject for consideration. It was the central feature on the birthday of the Christian Church, and has maintained its position ever since, wherever the Church has advanced along truly catholic and apostolic lines. Even where the sacrament is not properly estimated or viewed in its proper relations, it is still spoken and thought of with peculiar solemnity. Take the lowest possible view of the ordinance, and there is still enough to excite strong religious feeling, and call forth the spirit of worship and piety. Regard it simply as a memorial of Christ's sufferings and

death, and the words of institution as only a strong figure of speech, there will nevertheless be a blessing in it, and the communicant will not go entirely empty away. But how much better to know and realize the whole truth enshrined in the sacramental mystery. Why take only the crumbs, when the loaf can be obtained? In other words, why not possess the whole Christ so freely offered?

One says, the sacrament was solely designed to call up the slumbering memory to the fact of Christ's death on the cross. Another, that there is in it a spiritual communion with Christ's divine nature only—as if Christ could be divided. Another, that in it there is a feeding on Christ in a high, moral sense, which partaking of Him, however, does not differ from that which is effected by reading or hearing His word, or engaging in other acts of worship. Another, going to the opposite extreme, accepts Christ's words in all the literalness of common everyday fact, and says the natural elements of bread and wine are by the priestly act of consecration transmuted into the very body and blood of Christ; and that, too, in the face of our Lord's explicit instruction: "The flesh profiteth noth-



ing; the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life." Then another, rejecting such gross view of Christ's presence in the Eucharist, barely escapes Charybdis, and is engulfed in Scylla. He takes the words, "this is my body—this is my blood," in a literal sense, in such way that "in the Holy Supper the true body and true blood of our Lord Jesus Christ are truly and substantially present, and are distributed with the bread and wine, and are taken with the mouth by all those who use this sacrament, be they worthy or unworthy, good or bad, believers or unbelievers, in such wise, nevertheless, as that believers derive consolation and life from the Supper of the Lord, but unbelievers take it unto condemnation." This is the Lutheran doctrine. (See Formula of Concord, Art. VII.) The Reformed doctrine is neither one nor any of these. It is rational (not rationalistic) in that it does not violate common sense nor contradict the first principles of knowledge and fact. It is supra-rational also, in that it mediates Christ and His salvation to us in a manner beyond our comprehension, and is therefore a mystery. The Reformed doctrine is, that in the Sacrament believers receive the true body

and blood of Christ after a spiritual manner; that the union with Christ effected in baptism, is now, in the Holy Supper, strengthened by a real communication of Himself, as the vine communicates its own life and substance to the branches. According to Christ's intercessory prayer: "Even as Thou, Father, art in me and I in Thee, that they also may be in us." (John 17: 21.)

The apostolic declaration which precedes the words of institution are alone sufficient to show that the Lord's Supper is the holiest and most effectual means of living contact of the believer with Christ: "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a communion of (or, participation in) the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a communion of (or, participation in) the body of Christ? seeing that we, who are many, are one bread, one body: for we all partake of the one bread." (1 Cor. 10: 16, 17. Rev. Ver.)

Now from this inspired utterance setting forth what the Lord's Supper really is—a participation in the body and blood of Christ,—it should be evident that there is immeasurably more than a mere outward representation or symbol de-

signed to evoke pious memory of Christ's sufferings and death. So also there is no ground here on which to base the gross literal view that a change takes place in the natural elements. It is quite sufficient that the whole sacramental transaction, including the elements themselves, becomes the highest medium of spiritual communion with Christ, as human and divine, and, as such, the Head of the Body, the Church, which cannot have any part in Him, unless nourished by Him as the living Bread which came down from heaven.

Then the words of institution, as given in full by St. Paul (1 Cor. 11 : 23-25), can be fully understood only in the light of the explanation just quoted from the preceding chapter: "This is my body, which is for you," expresses the participation of the communicant in Christ's body, and what is actually done for Him in the sacrament; and the words, "Do this in remembrance of me," defines the subjective condition of mind and heart necessary to a proper godly observance of the ordinance. Both go together. To make all account of either one of the two momenta in the Holy Eucharist and none of the other would destroy the whole intent and meaning

of it, as is done by formalists on the one hand and by sentimentalists on the other.

Dr. Nevin believed, and doubtless for the best reason, that if the Church would waken up to the solemn importance of the true sacramental doctrine, there would be a great gain to the cause of true religion. A falling away from the apostolic idea of the sacraments as taught in the ancient creeds and in the Protestant confessions has proved all along to be a falling away from Christ, and a substituting for Christianity some of the most wretched caricatures of it, either in the form of high-church pedantry or of loose no-churchism and frivolity. It was most opportune therefore that such a work as the "Mystical Presence" made its appearance right in the heyday of unsacramental pietism, at the very time when New England Puritanism was crowned imperial master of evangelical Protestantism.

This book saved the Reformed Church from the maelstrom toward which the American Church was rapidly tending, and set all earnest minds to thinking, wherever the book was read; and today the very headquarters of Puritanism, if they would speak, would acknowledge their indebtedness to Dr. Nevin for their not being entirely

swallowed up by the rationalism of the age. This is an excellent time for the study of this great treatise. The age of prejudice has measurably passed, and live men would be thoroughly aroused by the weighty arguments in the work. There is a general activity in the religious thinking of the present time, and there are peculiar dangers to the cause of Christianity from scientific atheism, which is becoming bolder every day, and if not met with the best weapons of truth, many will make shipwreck of their faith. I know of nothing better than Nevin's "Mystical Presence" for every minister of the Gospel, and every wide-awake Christian to read and study thoroughly at this time. Never was it more needful than now to be armed against the enemies of Christ and His Church; and the work that best exhibits the nature of Christianity and the mystery of the glorious Bridegroom and the Bride will be the best weapon to use against the enemy: and that is, *par excellence*, without question, the work to which I have now directed the reader's attention.

## CHAPTER XVI.

**The Mercersburg Review.**

Of the ten years' war, as I have called it, several battles had now been fought, with victory complete and glorious on the side of Mercersburg. But, after more or less continual skirmishing and bush-whacking, about the middle of the decade open and furious hostilities broke out afresh and in vigorous earnest. The attacks came from all directions, from great and small. What was the matter, anyhow?

Just this: Dr. Nevin found that in order to do full justice to the religious needs of the time he must have a better medium than a weekly church paper by which to reach the centres of American theology, and discuss the important questions that were pressing upon thinking men's attention. So in January, 1849, was commenced the "Mercersburg Review," which appeared first as a bi-monthly, and afterwards as a quarterly. Dr. Nevin was the principal contributor to its learned pages. It was to be the medium

henceforth of his public utterances on theological and kindred subjects. It became at once the most powerful and learned periodical in the land. A Daniel was coming to judgment, and many a cherished theological idol was now weighed in the balances and found wanting. Theological discussion had elsewhere been largely given to questions that scarcely touched the heart of Christianity. It was Predestination, Election, Arminianism, Calvinism, Old School and New School, Perseverance of the Saints—and when united against Romanism there was something to stand from under. Then baptism was very much discussed by a lower grade of religionists, but only as to its mode of administration, over which the most unseemly quarrels were indulged in, exceeded only by the display on all sides of the most profound ignorance of the real meaning of the sacrament itself. In all this Dr. Nevin saw that Christianity as organic life and centering in the person of Christ, was scarcely thought of. Christ as a Substitute, ingeniously prepared and constituted to take the sinner's place, was a common theme; but Christ as the Head of His mystical body, the Church, with all that it implies, was scarcely mentioned, except inciden-

tally, or to round off a rhetorical period. The soul of Dr. Nevin was stirred within him, when he beheld the motley character of Christian belief and the altars dedicated to a hundred doctrinal gods, all having the name of Christ, but miserably lacking in the fulness of the grace which He presented in the mystery of God manifest in the flesh, both in His own proper person and in His body, the Church.

Dr. Nevin saw the decadence of those rich and fundamental Christian ideas, which appeared like wells of salvation, contained in the Apostles' Creed—the twelve wells of Elim—the apostolic fountains of truth, and all having their source in the living truth himself, Jesus Christ. He saw that denominations of historic origin treated the universal creed of Christendom as old and useless lumber, and not to be thought of for use in public worship. Such use of it was very generally regarded as a step toward Rome, and a full liturgical service as all of Romanism except the name. He had written the "Mystical Presence," and he was now ready to supplement it by propositions and corollaries which he had neither right nor desire to suppress. The Creed, which had been thrust into a corner, or held at arms' length as



something not altogether safe, except at a safe distance, was brought to the front. Christ the centre and heart of the Creed was viewed as the sum and substance of Christianity; not the invisible God planning and designing it from all eternity, and constructing a Christ as the legal instrument for effecting His design, but Christ as "the true God and eternal life," having all power in heaven and on earth, and the true form and expression of the eternal Godhead. True theology was shown to be Christology, the three persons in the Godhead not absorbed in the person of Christ, but Father and Holy Spirit revealed and incorporated in His person, as He said to His disciples—"He that hath seen me hath seen the Father—I am in the Father and the Father in me." (John 14: 9, 10.) The principle of Christianity is Christ Himself.

On this broad and immovable foundation Dr. Nevin built, and the Review through which he now addressed the public derived its peculiar inspiration and life from that source. It differed from all other theological Reviews from that very fact, namely, that it was set for the defence of the essential, living principles of Christianity and redemption, of the kingdom of God as a concrete

constitution centering and having its existence in Christ, and for true catholicity in doctrine, cultus, and practical life.

Dr. Nevin may or may not have foreseen that the *Mercersburg Review*, to which he was the chief contributor, would be a declaration of war, but such it was in fact. High churchism, low churchism, broad churchism, ultra Protestantism (that is, Protestantism with a vengeance), Romanism, extreme Calvinism, and all other isms and theologies described by St. Paul (Col. 2: 19) as “not holding fast the Head, from which all the body, being supplied and knit together through the joints and bands, increaseth with the increase of God”—all these had to meet the shock of battle from the guns of *Mercersburg*.

It was evident at once that the *Mercersburg Review* would “give place in the way of subjection, no, not for an hour” (Gal. 2: 5) to the demands of the off-slidden theologies of the time. It had to fight its way against great odds, but being conscious that truth was on its side, it seemed willing to be crushed to earth, in hope of rising again. It was *not* crushed to earth—so it had no occasion to rise out of dust or ashes.

The *Review* for the year 1849 contained

enough matter from Dr. Nevin's pen to make an octavo volume of more than 300 pages. The articles were all on subjects of first importance, in defence of pure Christianity, and were of the very highest order in every respect. The volume contained three articles on the Apostles' Creed; a review of Dr. Schaff's "Principle of Protestantism;" "Puritanism and the Creed," in which he shows the deteriorating tendency of unchurchliness; "False Protestantism," a raking fire at the obstinate persistence of modern pietistic pretense and anti-churchism; "Kirwan's Letters to Bishop Hughes," in which he shows that it takes more than a Puritanic Polemic to grapple with a learned Roman Catholic; "The Lutheran Confession," in which he bids God-speed to the Lutherans in their new enterprise of starting a Church Review for the maintenance of the true Lutheran doctrines and customs; two articles on "The Sect System," showing in the clearest manner that its underlying principle is false and anti-christian, and in practice wild and irregular, with a constant tendency to run into every sort of excess, away from the true idea of the Church, and landing anywhere except at the right place; "The Liturgical Movement," a

plea for a true order of worship, a masterly argument in favor of a liturgy that embraces the true idea of worship, as far as this may be known by a thorough and devout investigation of all that pertains to the subject; and other articles of perhaps equal importance.

The first volume of the *Mercersburg Review* was a plain index of what would follow in future numbers. The reigning popular theology was publicly and boldly arraigned for defection from Christianity in its original form and from true Protestantism. And it is not strange at all that the charges preferred against it were resisted by its adherents and promoters, and that the cry of heterodoxy and Romanism was raised against the *Mercersburg Doctor*. Of course Dr. Berg and a few others of the Reformed Church found new occasion for dissatisfaction and opposition, and no doubt sincerely believed that Dr. Nevin was leading the Church astray.

But let us see, very briefly, what dreadful heresies he was promulgating that should cause so great commotion and so much fear for the cause of evangelical doctrine. First, he had brought out the Creed from its dark corner, to which popular theology had consigned it, and

plead for its proper sense and its liturgical use. And as the Creed occupied the place of the heart in the Heidelberg Catechism, no sensible member of the Reformed Church at least could find any fault *there*.

He also wrote much on the Heidelberg Catechism itself, and all in its favor. Was he wrong in that?

He saw that there were errors and faults in much that was called Protestant, agreeing neither with the œcumenical creeds, nor with the Protestant confessions. Was he wrong in pointing out the errors? -

He perceived a widespread sentiment that Protestantism had no organic relation to the existing Church at the time of the Reformation, and that it started *de novo* from the Bible. Such stupid idea he speedily put out of countenance. Was he not right?

When pedantic High Church Episcopalians claimed to be the regular army and counted all other Christians as nothing but unauthorized and irresponsible sects, did Dr. Nevin commit a sin against evangelical Christianity, when he brought their ecclesiastical highnesses down from the lofty clouds to the ignoble dust?

When, on the other hand, Congregationalism spread itself and claimed to be by all odds the nearest to the ancient apostolic Church of any other Christian denomination, nearest to it in doctrine, government, worship and practice, did he do wrong to waken it from its pleasant dream and expose its claim as a delusion, when such it was ?

And when he showed by invincible argument that Protestantism is a normal and true development of the organic life of Christ's body, the Church, was he playing into the hands of the enemy ? or was he showing the only ground for the defence of the Protestant Reformation ? Some questions answer themselves.

This must do now for the year 1849 ; but the reader has only a glimpse, and scarcely that, of Dr. Nevin's contributions to the Review at that time. During the following year the subjects discussed were less likely to cause friction among Protestants, and one of the most powerful arguments ever made against Romanism is contained in two articles by Dr. Nevin in the second volume of the Review. They are entitled "Brownson's Quarterly Review." Mr. Brownson was a learned Roman Catholic layman, a convert

from three or four different shades of religious belief, and a foeman worthy of Dr. Nevin's steel. He was not to be trifled with, and the Mercersburg man did not attempt to trifle with him. The controversy was conducted on both sides without acrimony, each treating the other with respect. But the conflict was none the less earnest and vigorous on that account. And when the smoke of battle had passed away, true Protestantism was seen to hold the field, and stood like a stone wall, not damaged in the least by the missiles from Brownson's Roman battery. It was said at the time, by men who had watched the progress of the controversy, that the hardest blow Romanism ever received was by Dr. Nevin. He had said some things that were favorable to the Roman Church, but simply because there *are* some things in Romanism that are good, and he was not the man to withhold the meed of praise from anyone, from any Christian organization, or from any system of religious faith, so far as there was any just claim to it. But when the question was as between Romanism and Protestantism as such, Dr. Nevin did not hesitate to advocate the cause of the latter; and he proved to the satisfaction of all

whose faith was not held by Rome's iron rule that Protestantism was a true historical development of the apostolic catholic Church. A certain writer at that time made the remark that the future historian in referring to this controversy would say: "There were giants in those days." Protestants of every name owe Dr. Nevin a debt of gratitude, such as they owe to no one else, for having vindicated the Protestant Reformation from the Romish charge of sectism and schism, and for having brought to the light of day the great principles on which it rests secure.

Thus it is seen why the second volume of the *Mercersburg Review* represented a rather quiet year. The Puritanic Protestant batteries were silent, or nearly so, for the time being. Rome was getting hammered, and that was in itself such godly work that all *past* sins at least would be atoned for, if any had been committed by the Macduff who laid on the blows. But, then, who knows what will turn up next? The conqueror of Brownson may appear in another role, perhaps even come forth as the apologist for the the triple crowned autocrat—who knows? Better not utter praise too soon, or at least not be too lavish with it until it is seen and known to



a certainty that the fight with Brownson meant war to the knife with Rome, or whether after all it was only a little side-show to divert attention for a while from other designs, and make time for a new onset on some more supposed Protestant fancies and follies. We shall see.

## CHAPTER XVII.

**The Well is Deep.**

“The well is deep,” said the Samaritan woman to Christ, little knowing the profound import of her words as applying to the Man whom she addressed. He was himself the Well of Life—the deepest in the universe, and therefore inexhaustible. It cannot be otherwise that Christianity also, having its source in Him, is most profound and far reaching. Those persons, then, who have had all their lives but a superficial notion of it, would naturally be startled, and even alarmed, at having their faith rudely assailed, and some of their cherished beliefs tried and declared wanting.

It is not to be supposed that even the cultured representatives of Puritanism properly understood Dr. Nevin’s arguments against the Church of Rome. If he had discussed the subject in the ordinary style, and called the Pope and his Church by hard names, he would have been perfectly understood by great and small, but

that is not the way he did. It was, indeed, something to be thankful for, on their part, that he at least in his own way opposed the Roman Church, and so gave them reasonable ground for hope that after all there was not much danger that he would ever join himself to the mystic Babylon. But they were not *en rapport* with his learned and philosophical treatment of the subject, and so were not prepared for his startling utterances in the third volume of the Review. Like a clap of thunder in a clear sky were the articles on "Early Christianity."

The articles, three in number, aimed at three things: To bring down and make occupy its proper place, High Church Episcopalianism; to scatter the equally lofty pretensions of its neighbor at the opposite pole, Puritanism; and to teach the American Church some very useful lessons in ecclesiastical history. It was important that Church pride and pedantry should have a fall—better a fall in this world of probation and hope than in the next world. It was equally important that nasal-toned pietism of the New England type should be brought down to its proper level, that it might cease trumpeting its superior righteousness and intelligence in

the face of Christendom and the rest of the world. Then it followed that these two extremes in the Protestant world might receive wholesome lessons from Dr. Nevin's historical investigations. In the end, the whole object of the articles was *charity*, which is the bond of perfectness, an earnest desire to benefit his fellow Christians who were not able as he was to sound the depths of Christian doctrine and fact. He made some people very angry by those articles, but he couldn't help that; his business was to tell the truth, no matter how disagreeable it might be to those people who thought they were the special custodians of the religious interests of America. Dr. Nevin made it exceedingly doubtful whether all that was worth knowing came from the Eastern States, or from the upper tending part of the Episcopal Church. For the Episcopal Church as such he had great respect, as also for the Congregational; but when representatives of these claimed, each for his own denomination, the exact form of Christianity as it existed in the early Church up to the time it was supposed to have become corrupted, he could not allow the claim to stand unchallenged. The three articles on "Early Christianity," in which

he showed a perfect familiarity with history, its facts and its philosophy, were a complete and overwhelming answer to such high pretensions. He brought out to the light of day the immense difference between the early Church and either of the two claimants to perfect resemblance to it. He showed that by the law of development such likeness could not exist. The true Church of Christ is, of course, always the same substantially, having always "one Lord, one faith, one baptism," but different in form and expression, according to age and circumstances. He maintained, with great force of argument, that Protestantism can never prove its right to exist by attempting to prove an immediate moral connection with the early Church, thus leaping over the Middle Ages at a single bound, as if they formed an historical vacuum, so far at least as the Church was concerned. All this is the veriest fancy, and poor at that. Corrupt as the Church was during the so-called Dark Ages, it was still the Church, containing many excellent Christian people in all ranks of social life. The Reformation shook off the corruptions that were the growth of centuries, and the Reformed Church, thus relieved, rejecting all tradition not

in harmony with the Word of God, asserted itself as the Church having come to full age, and therefore to freedom. Its relation to the Church of the first four centuries, for instance, was no more immediate than that of a man to an ancestor of four or ten centuries back.

That two denominations so widely different as the Episcopal and Congregational should claim to be each an exact copy of the Church of the first few centuries, is curious enough, and shows that a wish may, indeed, be father to a thought, but it shows little else. Still, Dr. Nevin's<sup>7</sup> antagonists could stand all that, whether they believed it or not; but when he asserted that the early Church was more like the Roman Catholic Church of to-day than like either the Episcopal or the Congregational, there was a howl like the Jewish chorus at Capernaum: "This is a hard saying; who can hear it?"

That seemed sufficient to prove that Dr. Nevin<sup>7</sup> would soon land in Rome, where he could do little or no harm to the Protestant cause. For, was not the early Church a model for all time? If it was, then it must follow that if the Roman Church resembles it more than does any Protestant denomination, it has a rightful claim to true Catholicity, and to be the only true Church.

Now figures and logic don't lie, if the premises are all right. But how about this syllogism: All Christian martyrs are saints; Jezebel was a Christian martyr; therefore Jezebel was a saint? That is good and perfectly sound reasoning from the premises, which, if correct, can have only one conclusion, namely, that the woman thrown out of a window and torn to pieces by dogs, belongs to the glorious company of holy martyrs, whose name should adorn the calendar of saints. But *history* has something to say on that point, and it tells us that Jezebel was the incarnation of wickedness and one of the visible human forms of Satan. One of the premises being false, the conclusion must be false. The case before us is not as bad as this, and yet when the premises are examined in the light of history and fact, the conclusion also falls to the ground, as in the supposed case.

Let us see. Was the early Church, after the apostolic age, in all respects the model for all time? In some respects it undoubtedly was, for that was the period of œcumenical Councils and Creeds, and of the final settlement of fundamental Christian doctrines. Those Creeds have come down to us unchanged, and are the common

bond and property of the historical Church in all its branches and forms. In this regard Romanism and Protestantism are alike related to the early Church and the Christianity of that period. The Church fathers and their writings are the common property of both confessions. The Christian literature of that age is as eagerly sought after, read and studied by fair-minded Protestants as by Roman Catholics. But, on the other hand, the forms and modes of worship, Church government, customs and peculiarities of the early Church differed greatly from modern evangelical Protestantism of every description. It quite naturally bore a stronger resemblance to the Church against which Protestantism rebelled; for that Church came down from it by natural succession and growth, even though in the course of centuries it became foul with corruption in doctrine and morals. Then, too, the *doctrines* held by the early Church were not all the same as those held by Protestants. The germs of those doctrines which are peculiar to the Roman Church existed at a very early period; and before the close of what Protestants generally have regarded as the age of pure and unadulterated Christianity, there were more than



*germs*; practices, forms and doctrines, such as the Puritanic and Episcopal claimants referred to in this Chapter would utterly repudiate.

What, then, was the matter with Dr. Nevin? Why, it would seem as if he did very wrong in not making early Christianity better than it was; for allowing Romanism to take root and even show itself at a very early period; for not inculcating New England Puritanism among the people in that great formative period, or the stilted notions and airs of High Church Episcopalianism. Well, not that either. Dr. Nevin happened to live some fourteen centuries later, and so was not there to tender his good offices, and could of course have no hand in shaping the Church. What he would have done, had he lived at that time, his antagonists, the "Romanizing tendency" shriekers, could only have guessed at. Then in what consisted his great sin? We have it now: He refused to gratify certain parties by falsifying history. He could easily have done it. He could have affirmed that early Christianity was a living and swift witness against the whole system of Romanism; that the Reformation restored it to the Church re-established on its foundation, and that its

present perfect manifestation is to be found in the Congregational or in the Episcopal Church—either one, as you prefer. That might not have suited some other denominations, but it would at least have relieved him of the charge of making love to the scarlet lady, the Roman Church. To come to the point, Dr. Nevin sinned against his antagonists by simply telling the truth, thus clipping their wings, by which they had done some lofty soaring, and wished to do more. He put an end to their flights by putting to use his thorough knowledge of history. He did not make the early Church, nor did he say it was infallible, but more than hinted that it was in some things in error; and that after many centuries it developed, through the abiding presence and guidance of the Divine Spirit, into the rejuvenated and advanced form of the evangelical Church of the Reformation, having shaken off the errors of Romanism.

In those three articles on “Early Christianity” Dr. Nevin showed a master hand as a Church historian, and historical honesty such as is rarely found. Two things are to be noted here. The first is, that Dr. Nevin presented the facts of history in relation to the early

Church without addition or subtraction, and without regard to consequences. He determined to present what he believed to be historical facts, even if the logic of the facts would sustain the Roman Church in its whole Creed, customs and cultus. The second is, that true Protestantism does not suffer in the least by a comparison with early Christianity, or with that of the apostolic age. So Dr. Nevin believed. Had he believed otherwise, he would, without doubt, have gone over into the Roman Church. He showed his faith in Protestantism by remaining and exercising his ministry in it to the end of his useful life.

He was undoubtedly far in advance of his age, and much of his writing subjected him to the harsh criticism of men who could not sound the depths as he did, nor had his prophetic spirit. "The well is deep," and there are many even of those who claim to be teachers who have "nothing to draw with," except only from the surface. To-day the deep soundings by Dr. Nevin and their mighty revelations of heavenly truth are better understood, and the very terms he then used to express his great thoughts—terms which many regarded with creeping hor-

ror—are now freely employed by representative men in the leading denominations.

It is worthy of note that between the second and third articles on “Early Christianity,” Dr. Nevin published one on Ursinus, the principal author of the Heidelberg Catechism. This alone was sufficient to prove his loyalty to Protestantism. His high estimate of the man and his work shows that he believed the doctrines as set forth in that symbol of faith.

The fourth volume of the Review opened with the third article on “Early Christianity,” followed by one, a few months later, on the Heidelberg Catechism; another assurance to those who trembled for the Ark, that the Doctor had wonderful sticking qualities, and would give his life, if necessary, for the genuine principles of Protestantism.

Up to this time Dr. Nevin’s contributions to the “Mercersburg Review” were fifty-one articles, nearly all on the deepest and most important subjects. The articles on Cyprian, together with those on “Early Christianity,” furnished abundant occasion for attacks from several quarters, notably by Dr. Berg again, who, when he found that the Reformed Church sustained Dr.

Nevin, and refused to heed his own words of warning, concluded to leave the German Reformed Church and find a spiritual home elsewhere. He, therefore, said farewell to his congregation in a valedictory of sad complaint against a Church that refused his strong hand extended through years to save her from the rock on which she was sure to be broken to atoms. So he departed, and the Church he left behind continued to flourish and prosper. From a small and popularly unknown body she has become a host over two hundred thousand strong, and a power in the land, whose future looks brighter and brighter every day. And all this mainly through the instrumentality, under God, of the man whose gentle and loving heart, giant intellect and stupendous learning, as well as unique personality, were freely given in her service, for the honor and glory of Christ and His Holy Catholic Church.

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## CHAPTER XVIII.

**A Year in Carlisle.**

In a mere sketch like this much of great interest in Dr. Nevin's life must be passed over.

In 1853 he severed his connection with Marshall College, in order to rest from his severe labors, at least for some time. This was necessary after so many years of intense labor and anxiety. The college was removed to Lancaster, its name having been changed to "Franklin and Marshall College," and is now one of the first-class colleges of the country. The Theological Seminary followed in 1871.

The next year—1854—Dr. Nevin removed with his family to Carlisle, Pa., where he remained about one year, and then settled down in Lancaster, attracted no doubt by the college so dear to him. But his mother-in-law, Mrs. Jenkins, dying the same year, at Windsor Place, a charming country-seat, it was arranged that he and his family should occupy it. They remained there two years, when they moved to

a new home of their own near Lancaster, which was duly christened "Cærnarvon Place," where the Doctor lived during the remaining eighteen years of his life.

I first saw Dr. Nevin in June, 1854. He spent a week with my brother, Rev. Dr. A. H. Kremer, then, as now, pastor of the Reformed church of Carlisle. I was a student at Dickinson College, and resided at the time with my brother. The name of the great and good man had been familiar to me since I was in my eighth year; I was also acquainted with his life and work; and now that I was to see him and hear his voice, the anticipation was one of the most delightful I ever enjoyed.

It was a few days before the Commencement week of Dickinson College when Dr. Nevin made that visit to Carlisle. His coming was hailed with delight in learned and refined circles, and many in the lower ranks were interested. As for myself, I regarded it as the greatest privilege of my life to listen to his conversations on important subjects. These were frequent; for there was scarcely an hour during his week's sojourn among us that men of learning did not call upon him and engage him in

discussions of the great questions of the day. He was perfectly at home in them all. His listeners were glad to be such, and such only. Frequently his talks would become learned discourses, in which the subject in hand would assume concrete, logical form, perfect in all its parts and radiant in the light shed upon it from the resources of his capacious mind. These talks—O how I listened!—were better than so many books on the same subjects. The soul was lifted up by them into hitherto unexplored regions. Truths partially perceived before were now seen in something of their reality. Perversions of truth, rooted and grown up in the mind, went out like demons routed and driven by arrows of light from his mental armory. Like the Queen of Sheba, all felt that the half had not been told them of the man whom they now saw and heard.

During Commencement week Dr. Nevin attended all the exercises, which continued from Monday until Thursday. He took a lively interest in them, and delighted to speak approvingly of all that he saw and heard which he regarded as worthy of praise. Nor did he spare what was subject to adverse criticism. One of



the addresses was delivered by the famous blind preacher, Mr. Milburn, who was then, as he is now, chaplain of the national House of Representatives. He was then young and at his best as an orator. His subject was "Young America," or something of that kind, and his oration was one of the most brilliant and eloquent I ever listened to; but in his magnificent periods were concealed, and exhibited too, ideas and sentiments which could not stand the crucial test of Dr. Nevin's philosophy. I asked him what he thought of the address. "As to the outside," he answered, "it was perfect. The elocution, language and action I never saw surpassed. He is a man of extraordinary gifts of oratory, and it was uncommonly pleasant to hear him. But many of his ideas were abominable, and worse still, they permeated and poisoned the whole speech and turned even the excellent truths that he uttered in the direction of falsehood. If his ideas should prevail and produce their natural fruit, our American liberties and institutions would go to sticks." Such was his judgment of that eloquent and popular address, which was immensely applauded even by gray-haired men of learning who occupied the stage. They little

thought that a Daniel was there too and mentally writing "Tekel" at the same time that gold-headed canes beat applause, and the crowds below and in the galleries were held captive by the orator. Mr. Milburn has since become much wiser and no less eloquent.

It was a delightful week to Dr. Nevin. Here were the old and learned-looking stone walls of the college buildings, where his father had been a student, as also his younger brother, Prof. W. M. Nevin — who shared with himself the labors in Marshall College, and is still at his old post, where he has been for half a century without interruption. If for no other reason, he would naturally take a deep interest therefore in these college exercises, similar in their leading features to the ones at Mercersburg.

The "Union Philosophical Society" of the college had selected Dr. Nevin to serve as chaplain at their anniversary on Tuesday evening, it being understood that he, years before, had been elected by the society as an honorary member. But on Monday morning it was discovered that this was either a mistake or that his name had somehow failed to get on the register, and so the Unions determined to make the matter all right

at a meeting to be held on Tuesday morning at ten o'clock, when they would elect him a member and appoint him their chaplain for the evening.

But, alas for the numerous projects and schemes " 'o men 'an mice" that "gang aft aglee" on this uncertain and vagrant star of ours! Everybody knows that college societies watch each other as wakefully as two opposing armies armed to the teeth and anxious for battle. It so happened that a member of the Belles Lettres Society knew of this latest of Union items, and he lost no time in heading off the rival of his clan. Up to this moment there had been no question as to the ownership of Dr. Nevin by the Unions, and the jealousy of their rivals was very poorly concealed. On the other hand the Unions seemed to take on special airs of importance, which only tempted the green-eyed monster to plague his victims still more. But now there was a chance for the gay and alert Belles Lettres boys to humiliate the proud and dignified Unions, who seemed to regard their rivals about as Platonists would the frivolous Epicureans; for, were they not the Union *Philosophical Society*? — and philosophers they would be.

What place could there be for a man like Dr. Nevin among the frisky set that composed the Belles Lettres Society? So seemed to think the Union sages.

Nevertheless that society had opinions of its own concerning itself, and having an opportunity to steal a march on the other, there was no delay in doing it. As by electricity the word was passed round through campus, streets and everywhere, to members to repair to the Belles Lettres Hall for the single purpose of electing Dr. Nevin an honorary member and defeating the designs of the enemy.

It was amusing to see one after another, at various intervals, from the green Freshman to the grave Senior, pass up to the Belles Lettres Hall, each one holding a profound secret in his breast. Among these, and acting as chief drummer (the drumming being all done in whispers), was the most grotesque individual in the college, odd physically and mentally, droll, witty, indifferent as to what he was or ever would be, a general favorite, and by all odds the smartest and brainiest fellow in his class. His bushy hair was a sight to behold. It came down in front over his eyes in dark frowning bangs, so that he

looked like a wild man fresh from the forest. His gait was shambling, or indescribable rather; the heels of his boots always turning outwards from being worn off desk-shape, and at a long distance off anyone would suppose he was walking on stilts. He had plenty of money, yet dressed without the slightest regard to quality in men's wear, or to the fact that there were people around who had some sense of the eternal fitness of things. His face was a study—and a wonder. The nose would pass muster in good company; but the upper lip! Any one seeing him the first time would say it was stung by a hornet. When he laughed his countenance and person presented an appearance that, seen once, would never be forgotten. He was the curiosity, as well as favorite, of Dickinson College. Yet this odd specimen of the genus homo had an intellect that was able to grasp and hold the profound thoughts of Dr. Nevin. Just the evening before, he had heard him preach a powerful sermon in the First Presbyterian Church, and had taken it all in; and now that he had a chance to honor him, as well as play a handsome trick on the Unions, he was in his glory and almost ready to say: "Nunc dimittis"!

The hall was soon filled, and in a few minutes the work was done, Dr. Nevin elected an honorary member of the Belles Lettres Society, and immediately informed of the fact. The society remained in session until the Doctor returned an answer accepting the honor.

But the contest was not yet ended. The Unions, though grievously disappointed, feigned a provoking indifference, but still their friends, the enemy, attributed this to their stoical philosophy, not dreaming that there was anything in the air. Fortunately for them, an innocent Berks county Dutchman, who believed that everybody was as innocent as himself—a good Union man—boasted to a Belles Lettres student that the Unions were going to turn the tables on his society, to be effected in this way: The archives of the Union Society were to be thoroughly explored, with the almost certain hope of finding an old letter of acceptance by Dr. Nevin, showing that he had been for years an honorary member, which fact would nullify his election by the other society; that there would be a meeting at 10 o'clock on Tuesday morning, when, having discovered the needed document, they would appoint him their chaplain for the

evening. This was famous news, and within an hour every Belles Lettres was instructed to be in the hall at 9 o'clock sharp, on Tuesday morning, for the purpose of *initiating* the Doctor, and so taking him finally and forever out of the hands of the enemy. This was done. A committee of three was appointed to conduct him to the hall, where the mystery of initiation was duly performed; a messenger was sent to the Union Society to inform it of what was done—and the lively contest was ended.

The Berks county Dutchman, who was the innocent cause of the Union loss, was one of Nature's true nobility. A year later he graduated with honor. He delivered the German oration, which Gov. Pollock, who was present, said was a splendid effort, though he did not understand it. He no doubt judged the oration by the young man's appearance, earnest manner and splendid delivery.

Dr. Nevin was evidently pleased that the students of Dickinson College vied with each other in doing him honor, and was greatly amused at the deft proceedings which culminated as they did, especially as he saw that good humor prevailed throughout between the parties engaged in the contest.

That incident showed something of the wonderful power exerted by Dr. Nevin over men. He had been only a few days in Carlisle, but he had already been seen and heard by appreciative college students, who were deeply impressed by his extraordinary appearance, wonderful voice and mighty thoughts. An enthusiastic Senior remarked after Monday evening's exercises, that when Dr. Nevin arose to pronounce the benediction, he seemed to him more like a god than a man. Of course they had heard of him before, but they now realized more fully the real greatness of the man.

After that discomfiture of the Unions, one of them suggested that, after all, the Unions did not lose so very much, and that Dr. Nevin was no greater than hundreds of others, no greater than Dr. Blank, for instance. "I never heard of anything very great that he ever did, and I don't see why there should be such a furor about him. I never heard of any books that he wrote."

"Then you never read or heard of Nevin's Biblical Antiquities, I suppose?"

"You don't say *he* is the author of that book, do you?"



“Of course he is; who else? He finished writing it before he was twenty-five—while he was teacher of Hebrew in the Princeton Theological Seminary. Was Dr. Blank a master of Hebrew at twenty-three?”

“No, I don’t know that he is acquainted with Hebrew at all. But can it be that this is the same Nevin that wrote the *Biblical Antiquities*? Why, I read it, down in Alabama, years ago. But is that all he wrote?”

“No, indeed. If all his printed writings were in book form, it would make a respectable library. Has Dr. Blank any learned correspondence with the great theologians and scholars of Europe?”

“Not that I know of; Dr. Nevin either, for that matter ——.”

“For that matter, if you please, Dr. Nevin has been in learned correspondence with the leading lights of the old world—the Wilberforces in England, and ——.”

“Not the Wilberforces. You don’t say he corresponds with *them*?”

“Certainly. Why not? He is greater than any of them, and they consider it a rare honor to be on such terms with *him*. He has not his equal in England. Does Dr. Blank hobnob with those British lions?”

“Never mind Dr. Blank. Does Dr. Nevin know only theology?”

“To make a long story short, I simply tell you that he knows everything. His mind is so comprehensive that it takes in the whole domain of truth. He holds the key of universal knowledge.”

“Is he a linguist?”

“Yes, he understands Latin, Greek, Hebrew, German, and perhaps several other languages, as well as his native English. More still, he can make English look like a giant among pigmies. The English of some of his writings is the wonder of the age. How about Dr. Blank?”

“Let him go. How does it happen that I never knew this before? It seems to me if he were all you say he is, I would have known it, or something of it at least.”

“Yes, so it seems to me, too. If he belonged to your Church, you would have advertised him at every cross-road, but the Reformed are a little slow in that line of business. Still, I think you should have known a little more about this modern prodigy. You haven't been as wide awake as Prof. Godman, who never saw Dr. Nevin till now; and yet he knew him like a

book, because he had read his works. That young Godman has more brains and knowledge than your Dr. Blank can boast of. Only think, he (Blank) asked Dr. Nevin if he had been President of the college at Gettysburg! He likely never heard of the great stir which was made in the theological and religious world by the Mercersburg Professor. Why you and Dr. Blank allowed all that controversy to pass unnoticed, is to me a mystery. I wonder if Dr. Blank knows anything about Ebrard, Schaff, or Tholuck. In Europe you could not find a great theologian or philosopher that does not know Dr. Nevin. A learned German traveller in America said the name of Nevin in learned circles in Europe was as familiar as such theological landmarks as Krummacher and Neander. But he said nothing about Dr. Blank, and I suppose he did not know of his existence."

"Well, let Dr. Blank rest in peace. *Requiescat in pace.* I suppose he doesn't bother much about such knowledge. But as for myself I want to know more about your great Nevin. If you talk by the book, well then he must be a big man."

Soon after this Dr. Nevin moved with his fam-

ily to Carlisle, where they remained about one year. During this time he frequently preached in the Reformed and other churches. For several months he preached every Sunday evening in the Reformed church. The professors and students of the college frequently heard him there, and appreciated very highly his discourses, on which I never knew them to pronounce any but the most favorable opinions. One bright student said to me one day after hearing one of the Doctor's most pointed sermons :

“I don't think I'll hear Dr. Nevin again.”

“Why not?”

“Well, he always makes me feel so abominably mean. Last evening especially I thought he would annihilate me. You know what he said about the spirit of martyrdom, and how he talked about practical Christianity.”

“Yes, but wasn't he right?”

“Of course he was—that is what hurt, and just there's the rub. If it were not all true that he said, I would feel much easier. I don't think I ever heard things put in that way before. I tell you he took pretty much all the starch out of my religion. I used to think I could pass muster on a low plane at least; but he has taken from me even *that* little consolation.”

“ Yet he told the truth, as you admit. That truth ought to be agreeable to you. It is light seeking entrance which you should not try to avoid. Don't you think you have special reason to hear him whenever you have an opportunity ?”

“ Yes, no doubt ; but I hate to be shaken up so. I tell you, Kremer, the other preachers, or many of them, can thunder at people furiously and produce a powerful temporary effect, but there is nothing permanent, and you go away without making the application to your own self—and give it all to others. But when Dr. Nevin preaches, *I* at least feel that it is all for me, and it seems too much for me. I feel as if I would rather not hear such things.”

Nevertheless that student continued to hear the Doctor. He was attracted, so to speak, by the very thing that repelled. He has since died, and there is reason to believe that the sermons which had so often revealed to him his real condition were effectual means to prepare him for the better world.

At Carlisle Dr. Nevin met for the first time one of his most ardent admirers in the person of Rev. Mr. Godman, who at the time was assistant teacher of languages in the college, having taken

the place temporarily of the regular assistant. Mr. Godman was a man of about thirty, and young as he was, he had scarcely a superior as a scholar in the college faculty. He had graduated with unusual honor at the Ohio Wesleyan University, having never once failed of a perfect recitation during the whole course. His learning was extensive, reaching far beyond the subjects pursued at the University. In theology he was at home; and he had the ability to pursue it without subjecting himself to any denominational strait-jacket for a guide. His mind was of such order that some of his most cherished preconceived ideas had to yield to the logic of new investigation and maturer thought. He was not a theological clam or mummy, but a progressive student of sacred things.

He had several times occupied the Reformed pulpit in Carlisle, and the pastor was much surprised at the similarity of his thoughts with much of what had become known as Mercersburg theology. Especially was this manifest in a communion sermon, in which Dr. Nevin's "Mystical Presence" was seen all through, not copied by any means, but reproduced extemporaneously, after having been thoroughly made his own. It

was after that service that the pastor asked him where he got all his Mercersburg theology, and his answer was that he got it from Dr. Nevin's writings in the "Mercersburg Review" and the "Mystical Presence." He said: "When I first read that book, I was very much pleased with it, though somewhat staggered by some of its arguments; but it seemed to me such a great work that I read the whole of it a second time. Then I understood it, I think, and I have adopted its views as my own. I consider it the greatest work on that subject."

That explained it all. So when he heard of Dr. Nevin's coming to Carlisle, he was unspeakably delighted. He now saw and heard the man whom he had seen so often on the printed page. He was not disappointed in him. On the contrary, his high regard for him was greatly increased when he saw him face to face; when from his knowledge of him through the silent letter he came to personal intercourse and friendship with the great man himself. It is doubtful whether any of the Doctor's disciples appreciated him more than did that gentle, modest and learned young professor.

One Sunday morning Mr. Godman, in the

absence of the pastor, preached in the Reformed church when Dr. Nevin was present. There was a slight embarrassment perceptible, which was greater perhaps than could be noticed; for his habitual quiet manner concealed any great inward disturbance, if there was any; and he preached without any apparent labor, while at the same time it could be seen that he realized the presence of one of the very greatest masters in Israel. Afterwards Dr. Nevin made this one remark in regard to the sermon: "It was full of thought." He entertained a very high regard for Mr. Godman as a man of rare worth and great promise; and while the Doctor remained in Carlisle, the young professor was one of his most welcome and frequent visitors. Like Saul of Tarsus, he sat at the feet of this greater Gamaliel, and learned many a profound lesson from his lips.

The leading citizens of Carlisle had organized a monthly lecture course, in which the best home talent was employed, and occasionally from abroad. Dr. Nevin, on short notice, was asked to deliver one of the lectures. His subject I have forgotten, and for some reason or other I did not hear the lecture; but those who heard



and understood it pronounced it a matchless production and by far the best of the course. A desk had been placed, as usual, on the platform for the speaker's manuscript, but to the surprise of all Dr. Nevin had no manuscript, not even a note. It was supposed that a learned lecture must necessarily be written out and read from the desk, and when the Doctor stood up and spoke without the aid of manuscript or notes the intelligent audience was taken by surprise; and when he was done, having spoken over an hour, the surprise was wonder and delight.

The next day I was amused by a description of the lecture by an intelligent and enthusiastic citizen, Dr. R., a prominent member of the Presbyterian Church. A friend passing by, the Doctor inquired whether he had heard Dr. Nevin's lecture. "No," he answered, "what would have been the use? I couldn't have understood it at any rate." "O well," said Dr. R., with great animation, "it would have done you good just to hear it thunder a little." That man was impressible and of keen penetration, able to comprehend the great ideas that he heard from the greatest master of the age, and his whole being was thrilled by their surpassing

excellence and power. He even thought the personal appearance of the lecturer and the sound of his voice were a sufficient attraction.

Mr. Godman, thinking that Dr. Nevin might possibly not have a written address, prepared to take notes, and reported the lecture for one of the town papers. No one could have done this without being in full sympathy with the speaker—and Mr. G. was therefore the man to give as faithful a pen picture of the living production as could be made.

That was a good year for Carlisle; if not specially so, it was not because it had not in it for that period in its bright history *a king of men*, whose authority was greater and more real than that of any crowned monarch of the Old World.

## CHAPTER XIX.

**A Retrospect.**

Dr. Nevin's life at Mercersburg, covering a period of thirteen years, was one of the most fruitful in mental and scholarly work that has ever been known.

He not only taught in the Theological Seminary, but was president of the college at the same time, and in each institution he performed more than one professor's share of service. Besides all this, as we have already seen, he did a large amount of literary work, making enough printed matter to fill half a dozen large volumes. True enough, I could name authors from whose prolific pens five or ten times that much has been turned off in the same length of time; but two things must be considered: one is, that their time was all their own, with naught to interfere; the other is, the difference in subjects, substance, and quality. Quantity is a small thing as compared with quality. There may be a vast difference between bulk and weight. There is more weight

in a single Review article of Dr. Nevin than in many a large volume. The amount of instruction imparted by his productions is immense. There is enough in them for the study of a lifetime.

His instructions in Church history, in the various branches of philosophy, and in almost every branch of theology, if they could be reproduced, would make a library of vast learning.

To relieve the necessities of the college, in a time of financial pressure, he assumed the additional task of teaching the higher mathematics. He was ready at any time to take charge of any department when there was a necessity for it. All this showed him a man of the broadest culture, thorough in all branches of learning, a master of universal knowledge. Otherwise he never could have borne up under such a weight. This accounts, more than anything else, for the ability which he had of speaking on short notice, or without any previous notice, on the most profound subjects. Of course, there are many glib-tongued orators who are always ready with a speech, but their subjects are usually of the passing hour, and their speeches frequently consist of wit, flowers of rhetoric, glittering generalities,

and stale platitudes. But Dr. Nevin was not built that way. He spoke from the fulness of heart and mind, and many of his off-hand addresses, if they had been taken down and printed word for word as spoken, would have made first class literature.

He seldom wrote sermons, and only for extraordinary occasions. His extemporaneous sermons differed but little from written productions, except in their delivery. In speaking he sometimes hesitated for lack of a word needed to give true expression to his thought. Those accustomed to hear him did not object to this, knowing the cause, and feeling certain that in due time the great thought struggling for expression would come forth clothed in substantial elegance and beauty. Some men of immeasurably less learning, instead of halting, would fill up the vacuum with a string of words with little or no sense ; but Dr. Nevin was not concerned at all about the temporary impression made upon an audience by mere fluency of speech. Not a word would he utter at such juncture until he could give satisfactory form to his struggling thought ; and the result was always a fine work of art, all its parts united and fitted together as a complete whole, with no

false episodes, and no oratorical tricks, to mar its just proportions. I once heard one of his admiring students say, that it was often a relief to him when the Doctor would halt in his speech, as it gave time to take in and hold fast what he had already spoken, and a chance to keep up with him. It is a matter of regret that his many sermons and addresses delivered in this way are lost to the general public. If some beloved disciple of his could reproduce them, he would by that means write a more real biography of him than could be done in any other way.

The greater part of Dr. Nevin's life in Mercersburg was passed amid theological conflict. He could not look with favor upon the drift of popular thought, and was not the man to keep silent when he believed that false views of Christianity were extensively propagated, which had already taken deep root in the popular mind. Especially he saw that the life centers of gospel truth as expressed in the Apostles' Creed were disarranged and thrown into confusion, and believed in, if at all, without regard to their proper order and unity in the person of Christ. The gospel according to the Creed was not the gospel of popular teaching. Its articles were believed,

but only as so many separate truths, without the necessary order and connection involved in the very idea of a fundamental symbol of Christian faith. As a consequence the Creed was not used either in a liturgical or a didactic way in by far the larger part of the American Church. The most popular part of the Sunday school literature ignored it altogether; and secretly, if not openly, it was regarded with suspicion, as if it were a relic of the Dark Ages and too closely related to popery to be handled with safety. In fact, theology in America was at loose ends; while at the same time American Puritanism had set itself up as Pope, imagining that it had sounded the mighty depths of Christian theology and anathematizing everything that did not bow to its infallible dictum.

But a Daniel had in due time come to judgment and shook to its foundations the structure that was built largely on sectarian and anti-Christian conceit. He was victorious in every contest. Under his tremendous blows every antagonist went down.

He did not strive against what was true and good in the reigning theology; he attacked the errors only. He rebuked the false tendencies of

the times, and especially the frivolous sectarianism, which had no idea of the Church as the body of Christ. He freely admitted that there was good in the midst of the evil, and true Christian piety in spite of the wide-spread defection from the true catholic idea of Christianity; but he saw clearly that even the good and true which still remained would perish, unless there would be a return to the ancient faith as presented in the Apostles' Creed.

Dr. Nevin had no selfish partisan end in view. His sole object was to discover truth and proclaim it for the common benefit of men. If at any time any denomination of Christians showed signs of awakening to higher and purer conceptions of the gospel, he rejoiced. His idea of Christianity and the Church was not denominational. He preferred the Reformed Church to any other because in it he found more freedom than anywhere else for the exercise of his mind on the living questions that were forced on his attention, as well as because of its glorious history, catholicity and apostolic character. But he had no idea of proclaiming it as the highest conception of what the Church ought to be. He did succeed in raising the Reformed Church to the highest plane of



Protestant catholicity in this country, and in the world—but others also shared the benefit, as was his own heartfelt and godly desire.

The charge of Romanizing made against him was entirely gratuitous. When he found it necessary to defend the Roman Church from the innumerable false accusations by pseudo Protestants, he did it without any hesitation or reserve. When he handled such Protestantism with severity and dealt gently with Romanism, he simply did what has always been considered honorable and right, that is, to soundly thrash a false accuser, and sympathize for the time being with the accused. But on the other hand, when Romanism held up its head on high and misrepresented Protestantism, he made the hair fly in the other direction, and made Rome repent of its audacity in challenging the man who never knew defeat. It was not strange that the more enthusiastic part of Romanists prayed hopefully for the speedy and complete conversion of Dr. Nevin, nor was it strange that the most cool and far-seeing of them declared that he was their most powerful and dangerous enemy. They could easily repel the vulgar attacks made from all points of the compass, but when Dr. Nevin spoke

—as in his controversy with Mr. Brownson—it was something else. For about the first time they heard a man in defence of Protestantism without the usual abuse of Romanism, one who did not argue against Rome simply from hatred of it, and who knew how to maintain his own cause philosophically, historically, and theologically. For once they had to meet a champion who could not be scorned or waved aside with the usual supercilious air. For once they were beaten, like all others who attempted to measure swords with the man at Mercersburg.

When he resigned his position in the college, he thought his active career was about ended, little dreaming that there were yet thirty-three years left of his earthly life, and that most of these would be years of great mental activity. After a rest of one year at Carlisle and several more at Windsor Place, his strength was renewed, and being yet in the prime of life, he entered again upon another full decade of service for God and his Church. He again wielded his powerful pen, and his productions were pronounced by the ablest men in Europe the best and most important that came to them from the Western world. Indeed, not even what may be called his resting

period formed a vacuum in his life. Such a "nature abhors a vacuum." Absolute rest to one of *his* kind would be distressing, and not to be endured. He rested—but at the same time accomplished more for the Church and mankind than many a man officially employed. His words spoken and written during that period of rest would alone make an author famous. His sermons, addresses, letters and writings of that period are of more account than most men's literary works of a lifetime. And that was only while he rested! Then, what after that?

## CHAPTER XX.

**Gigantibus Est Contentio.**

If the reader would know how Dr. Nevin took a recess of rest—a vacation—let him look up the *Mercersburg Review* of that period, and he will learn that rest with him was not idleness. He was relieved of the double or triple responsibility of his former official position and its onerous duties, yet he continued to work on ; and being free from official cares, his writings were now characterized by a greater buoyancy of thought and expression than formerly. His former productions, especially the *Review* articles, stand alone, and always will, as *Nevinian* classics, to which men will turn, ever and anon, as scholars do to the literature of ancient Greece and Rome. If they were generally read and studied by Christian teachers, they would do more to keep theology and the Church in the right track than all the multitude of so-called theological works which fly from the press like quails from their shells. And yet his later writings are scarcely less im-

portant, as they are in some sense the fruit of the former.

From the time that he withdrew from the College in 1853 to the end of his life in 1886, his literary productions were great and numerous, consisting of published sermons, addresses, essays and learned Review articles, besides unpublished lectures on various subjects delivered in Franklin and Marshall College, of which he was President for ten years, from 1866 to 1876, having also previously given lectures in the institution on the philosophy of history and other subjects.

But the most brilliant performance of his post-Mercersburg life, as it seems to me, was his review of Dr. Charles Hodge's Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians. Dr. Hodge had been duly installed Pope in the Presbyterian Church by his admirers, just as Dr. Nevin had been in the Reformed Church. In the case of each a sort of unconvened Council of enthusiasts had voted a decree of infallibility; and for two such men to meet on the field of theological controversy, was something sublime, to say the least.

It should be taken for granted that any literary production of Dr. Hodge would be worthy

of respect from all who are capable of appreciating and recognizing real intellectual ability. He was regarded everywhere as one of the few theological giants of America, and he represented the best and strongest phase of the modern Puritanic belief. He was also a Calvinist of the old school, held strictly to the "Five Points;" and in fact he simply took Calvin straight, barring perhaps his views on the sacraments, as Dr. Nevin had, during the ten years' war, occasion to point out. But great as he was, he was not great enough to cope with Dr. Nevin in a combat of ideas. He doubtless had no thought that the man in his quiet retreat at Windsor Place would make an assault upon the splendid theological structure he reared on the foundation of a great apostolical Epistle.

In his Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians, Dr. Hodge proceeded on the assumption, from first to last, that the keynote of the inspired document was God's eternal election of the saints and their certain predestination to everlasting life. This, according to Hodge, was the ruling thought in the Epistle, and he made it his text from which to prove the truth of Calvin's metaphysical view of the divine decree as pertaining to all that are finally saved.

Dr. Nevin entertained the highest regard for his friend and former teacher of Princeton. But he had long outlived his relation to him as a learner; he was his peer in every respect; and in intellect, solid attainments and logical power far his superior. To say this is not to detract from any proper estimate of Dr. Hodge's ability as theologian and scholar. It is only affirming the extraordinary greatness of Dr. Nevin; and his wonderful intellectual power, as well as his deep spiritual insight, enabled him to penetrate the depths of sacred truth as few men have been able to do; so that no antagonist could ever prevail against him. It was the same in this case; he tore Dr. Hodge's theory to shreds; and when the smoke of battle had passed away, there was left that grand book of the Bible, a gem however in quite a different setting.

Dr. Nevin showed by reasoning profound and convincing that St. Paul had no such doctrine in view as the unconditional divine election when he wrote the Epistle. He also showed how far he had advanced in his theological thinking since he came into the Reformed Church. He evidently had cast aside the doctrine of election and predestination as taught in

the Westminster standards. It is certain that he greatly admired the Heidelberg Catechism for not putting into the mouths of the faithful a doctrine which represents God as a being to be feared rather than loved. So, instead of confirming the Reformed Church in the belief of the Calvinistic decretal system, he broke what bonds there were of that kind, and showed a better way by opening the Scriptures in the light of Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, by holding up Christ as the alpha and omega of the Christian salvation, and not abstract deity exercising an arbitrary will in blessing and cursing, saving and damning, "for His own glory"(!). According to unconditional divine election, the election is an end in itself, the elect having salvation as a certain and inalienable gift of God's grace. For some infinitely wise reason God decreed from all eternity that a certain number, to be neither increased nor diminished, should be saved, and that not on account of faith or good works as foreseen in them, but only on account of His good pleasure; and that for such elect He prepared the means by which the salvation was to be accomplished—that is, sent His Son into the world that through Him



the chosen or elect ones might be saved. Dr. Hodge maintained in his Commentary that such was the doctrine which was set forth in the Epistle to the Ephesians, and that it was the golden thread which ran all through it.

Dr. Nevin shattered that idol as completely as iconoclast ever shattered an idol. He affirmed without fear of contradiction, and drew his argument from the Word of God, that the election spoken of in the Epistle in question and that of Dr. Hodge were two different things entirely. The election, instead of being an end in itself, was a means rather to the great end, namely eternal salvation. The elect are not necessarily saved. They are the called of God, set apart from the world to His service, baptized into Christ, members of the family of God, yet without absolute certainty as to their successful completion of the Christian race and the final victory over sin and Satan. They are, without distinction, called saints, children of God, heirs of the promises of God, because of their connection with the Church, which is Christ's body. And yet some of these may fall away and finally be lost. Nevertheless they were "elect," precious in the sight of the Lord, His children by

adoption and grace. Surely they were rational beings, endowed with freedom of will, and not saints of necessity—simply because they could not be otherwise. St. Peter tells all such to make their calling and election sure; so that it is not sure of itself, and will not be unless the subject of it freely and of his own will “works out his own salvation with fear and trembling.”

The Epistle to the Ephesians, as all the New Testament epistles, proceeds on the fact that all whom it addresses are members of the Church, that sacramentally at least *all* are saints, and therefore are elect. The word “ecclesia” (church) itself means that; namely, the called, the elected, so that the word election is not used here to denote what Calvin means by God’s eternal decree, effecting the sure salvation of a certain fixed number. Every act of divine grace is a means for the accomplishment of some benevolent purpose in men’s behalf, and their complete salvation. Calling, by the spoken and written word; baptism; confirmation; the Lord’s Supper; these are the election, and are gracious means to secure the priceless boon of eternal life as begun here and continued forever. The divine election, in the mind of St. Paul when he

wrote the Epistle to the Ephesians, was not that which was in the mind of Dr. Hodge when he wrote his commentary on it. The Calvinistic decree, with its limited atonement, its scheme of redemption for the elect only, is altogether foreign to the thought which runs through the whole body of apostolic epistles. The Epistle to the Ephesians especially is the one least to be thought of as teaching the fatalistic ideas of Calvin on the subject of the divine decrees. The prominent thing in it is not Calvinistic election (for that is not in it at all), but the Church, or Christ and the Church: "This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the Church." (Chap. 5: 32.) It is the mystery of the marriage relation, the Bridegroom, Christ, and the Bride, the Church, being united as one flesh. Election then pertains to the Church, belongs to it, and is spoken of in connection with it. Nor is the Church merely instrumental in giving practical effect to the absolute decree from all eternity; the Church is itself the divine means by which men are called, and in which men are to make their calling and election sure.

Dr. Nevin's review of the commentary consists of two articles making nearly 100 pages of

the Mercersburg quarterly, and is no doubt one of the clearest and most exhaustive presentations of a most disputed theological subject. Dr. Hodge never replied to it, and for the excellent reason that he could not. That Dr. Nevin had the field all to himself, and was master of the situation, was declared by an eminent Presbyterian theologian and professor, and one of Dr. Hodge's most devoted friends. It is nothing to boast over, but to be devoutly thankful for, inasmuch as until then no such satisfactory solution of the question concerning the divine sovereignty and election had ever been attempted. And at the present time it would be an excellent thing for Presbyterians to read and study closely Dr. Nevin's masterly review of Dr. Hodge's Commentary on the Ephesians, now that the whole denomination is stirred up on the subject of the revision of the Westminster standards. No one interested in the matter should fail to secure that theological classic. It should be reprinted in separate form and secured by every Presbyterian minister and intelligent layman in the country. It has not had half the chance to do the execution it is capable of doing, and now is a good time to bring it out from its resting place in the

old numbers of the *Mercersburg Review* and send it forth on a most noble errand. It would pour in a very flood of light where there is now only an impression, more or less strong, that some change is necessary. It would solidify the movement to revise; it would put the whole question in proper form; it would do more than make such verbal changes as would merely soften the apparently harsh language of the Confession; it would eliminate, rather, what new light has shown to be erroneous; it would liberate the conscience from unnecessary bondage. It is pitiable to see what reasons some give for revision, showing plainly a weak conception of the question at issue and the interests at stake, and what arguments are presented by others for leaving the Confession intact, bristling as it does with points that proclaim God's wrath rather than His love. As compared with Dr. Nevin's monogram on this vexed subject most of the discussions on the present question of revision seem like trifling.

The effect his great argument had on the Church at large has been greater no doubt than can now be measured, but in the Reformed Church it did immensely to settle its theology on

that head. Those who have carefully read and studied it have no special difficulty with the doctrine of election, but see it now in the light of "Christ and His Church," and not in the darkness of God's terrible vengeance on all except a few arbitrarily chosen ones, snatched as brands from the fire and then wrought into fit subjects of His kingdom. Dr. Nevin has come nearer to reconciling the divine sovereignty with man's free agency than any one I know of, at least.

During this vacation period, Dr. Nevin took in hand to bring down another giant, this one being Dr. C. P. Krauth, probably the ablest theologian in the Lutheran Church of America. The two men were intimate and mutually admired friends, and each spoke and wrote of the other in the highest terms of esteem. But such friendship did not prevent Dr. Nevin from antagonizing his distinguished friend, when he believed that truth required such a sacrifice. And truth did require it on a certain important occasion. The important occasion was this :

Dr. Krauth wrote a book entitled "The Conservative Reformation," in which he labored to prove that the only conservative Reformation was that headed by Luther, asserting that the

Reformation on the Reformed side was radical, one-sided, unchurchly, a violent breaking loose from the historical Church, that is, schismatic and revolutionary; that the Lutheran was the only true Protestant Church, and that no other was truly catholic and apostolic, though admitting that true Christian piety might be maintained by individuals elsewhere. Such in brief was the position assumed by a man who had become the mouthpiece of at least an important branch of the Lutheran Church in America. It was a tremendous undertaking to prove to the world that the Lutheran Church alone was worthy of being called a Church, that in fact it was *the* Church, and all others claiming such distinction were only sects. The undertaking too seemed the more heroic from the fact that it was a question as to which of the organizations having the Lutheran name was really entitled to it: The General Synod, General Council, Missouri Conference, or some other of the name—which? — Well, the Lutheran Church, the Church of the Augsburg Confession; yes, that was it.

Now Dr. Nevin, with his broad, catholic, unsectarian views, always regarded the Lutheran

Church with great respect, but he would allow no narrow or bigoted views to be published to the world from any respectable quarter unrebuked. So in this case. It was during the civil war, and as the publication of the Review had been for that reason suspended for several years, he replied to Dr. Krauth through the weekly "Messenger." What a pity the Review was not running then, as in that case there would now be bound together in library volumes another series of Dr. Nevin's powerful polemics, one of the most vigorous counter assaults ever made on the field of theological battle. He bravely defended the Reformed side of the Reformation and reduced to atoms the monstrous assumption that Lutheranism had an iota of superior right to the claim of true catholicity over that of the Reformed Church. He drove through Dr. Krauth's book like Jehu, with unmerciful logic, and covered with confusion the abominable exclusiveness, however respectfully maintained, that could pretend to be Protestant and yet ignore or belittle the world-historical movement which developed into the Reformed Church—the Church that embraces within its mighty fold the most pro-



gressive, active and numerous part of evangelical Protestantism.

Dr. Krauth never made reply. He was asked by one of his friends why he did not; and his honest answer was: "Dr. Nevin's position is impregnable."

## CHAPTER XXI.

**Concluding Notes.***Three-score and Ten.*

In the year 1866 Dr. Nevin began another decade of responsible official life as President of Franklin and Marshall College. For more than ten years previously he was the leading figure in the liturgical movement in the Reformed Church, on which subject he had expended much thought and learning, and had been variously engaged in literary work and lecturing in the college; and now again, at the age of sixty-three, we find him at the head of old Marshall in its new home at Lancaster, the same college with the new name of Franklin added to it.

In 1873, on the 20th of February, occurred his 70th birthday. A special meeting of the Eastern Synod was in session at the time in the First Reformed church, Lancaster (Dr. A. H. Kremer, pastor), where, in the temporary absence of the Doctor during one of its sessions, it was

announced by Prof. W. E. Krebs, that the Faculty of the college and others had planned a surprise for him in the form of a celebration by his numerous friends, and the members of Synod were invited to join in it. Accordingly, on the afternoon of the 20th, carriages, omnibuses and other vehicles, filled with people who wished to honor the great and good man, formed a long line and proceeded to Cærnarvon Place. The Doctor was taken by surprise. Here were crowded into several rooms old, middle aged, and young, nearly all his pupils at one time or another, come to congratulate him, and wish him still more years of happy usefulness in the service of God and His Church on earth. Dr. E. V. Gerhart delivered the address of greeting and congratulation, and then in the name of the faculties and students presented the Doctor with a valuable gold watch.

Dr. Nevin's response to Dr. Gerhart's address was, of course, entirely unpremeditated, and yet it was fit for the best print just as it was spoken. It was carefully and accurately reported, and can now be read in Dr. Apple's book, in which it occupies five pages. Get the book and read this address by Dr. Nevin on his 70th birthday,

and learn from it much of the great soul and great heart of the man who spoke it.

*Liturgy.*

Dr. Nevin was at the head of the liturgical movement in the Reformed Church. He had found the Church practically without a liturgy—with nothing more than a hand-book for ministers, to be used only by themselves on sacramental and special occasions. The labors, in study and in writing, which he performed in connection with this subject were very great and numerous, and resulted in vast benefit to the Church. There is no more important subject than that of Christian worship and cultus, and should be well understood. The forms of worship should be in accord with its true idea, whether the forms be prescribed or otherwise; and that the Church should have a good liturgy, one that comprehends the whole of worship, public and private, so as at least to serve as a directory, is plain enough to the ordinary mind. The question still would be then as to the style or plan of the work, and this question caused a great commotion in the Church for a number of years. But the controversy was educational and

resulted in excellent fruits. The man or woman at the present time in the Reformed Church that knows as little about liturgy as did the people generally about forty years ago, is certainly to be pitied. The conflict, sore as it was at times, only shows that great religious questions cannot be settled in this imperfect state of existence without a war of opinions, and that it is better than peace founded on mutual ignorance and prejudice. The results were, first a provisional liturgy, which, after about ten years, was revised into a complete and artistic Order of Worship, in proper form, according to what was regarded the true idea of a liturgy for minister and people. For years afterwards this order of worship was accepted and used, in whole or in part, by a majority of the churches, while a very respectable minority rejected it, on account of certain features which they regarded as in conflict with Reformed doctrines and customs. Then some years later the "Peace Movement" was inaugurated, and a commission appointed to settle the differences in the Church, if possible, and the result was entirely successful. The Liturgy was again overhauled and amended so as to meet the general approval of the Church, retaining how-

ever the substance and liturgical principles of the original work. The progress made by the Reformed Church, during the controversial period of her history, in the intelligent apprehension of the divine idea of Christian worship, was truly great. This is realized and felt in our churches generally, as manifested in sacred song, observance of the Church festivals and the Christian year, in church architecture and furniture, and most especially in the character of the free prayers offered in public by the ministry. The Reformed Church is on the right road to the best possible standard in the matter of cultus, and too far advanced ever to turn back.

In all this movement Dr. Nevin took a leading part. A most devout and godly man himself, his devotional spirit was impressed on the liturgical work, which has for a generation directed the public services in the Reformed Church.

#### *Tercentenary Celebration.*

In January, 1863, the three hundredth anniversary of the adoption of the Heidelberg Catechism was celebrated by a general convention of the Reformed Church in the United States, held in the Race Street Reformed church in Phila-

delphia (Dr. J. H. A. Bomberger, pastor). Dr. Nevin was chosen president of the convention. The literary fruits of that great gathering of representatives of the Church are contained in two volumes: The Tercentenary Monument, consisting of the proceedings of the body, essays and addresses by leading men in the Church, and the communion discourse of Dr. Nevin, on the "Undying Life in Christ" — also the opening sermon by Dr. S. R. Fisher; and the tercentenary edition of the Heidelberg Catechism, in German and Latin, and a new translation in English, with an elaborate introduction by Dr. Nevin which makes about half the volume. This and the sermon are of uncommon merit and value—like everything else that came from his facile pen and wonderful mind. Here is another evidence that he was true to the principles of the Protestant Reformation, apprehended as these were by a mind that was free from all partisan bias.

*The Vatican Council.*

That was quite a different convocation from the one just spoken of. It was a council of Roman Catholic bishops at the Vatican in Rome, called together by the Pope for the express pur-

pose of declaring him infallible in his official character. The decree of infallibility having been promulgated by the Pope, Dr. Nevin treated the subject in an exhaustive article in the Review. In his articles on "Early Christianity," twenty years previous to this Romish folly, he had created a flutter in some quarters by assertions in which Rome seemed to be painted in colors quite too fair. But he had succeeded, in due time, in convincing reasonable people that some things could and ought to be said about the Roman Church not included in the black list of hard names. Besides, the subject under discussion at that period was not the question about papal infallibility; it was quite different, and related to matters in which that Church appeared, by comparison, to considerable advantage. Now, however, that same Church lays herself open to a new and serious objection by announcing to the world a new dogma, or promulgating an old one, and hurling anathemas at the heads of all who refuse to accept it as gospel. It was a challenge, and Dr. Nevin felt it to be his duty to answer back and expose the fallacy and downright blasphemy involved in the monstrous claim of the Church of Rome in the person of its visible head.



The decree of the Vatican Council was a fruitful and lively theme for all sorts of writers. For a considerable time the religious press especially teemed with observations, both wise and otherwise, on the big thing; and in most, if not all, the Protestant quarterlies there were labored and learned articles on the subject, writted by well known representative men. But I venture the assertion, without the least hesitation, that the presentation of the case by Dr. Nevin was worth more than all the rest put together; that it dealt more philosophically and theologically with the question, and did more execution, than all other efforts in that direction combined. He left no stone unturned, nor did he leave a foundation of sand for papal infallibility to rest upon.

It was a happy resort, or loop-hole, for Romanists to say that infallibility pertained to the Pope only in his official character, in this way explaining how certain ungodly and even infidel popes could and did always speak from the pontifical throne without error. But Dr. Nevin exposed that figment in all its superfluity of unrighteousness, and showed the monstrous absurdity and wickedness of the notion, that official

infallibility can be, and is in its own nature, entirely separate from personal holiness; that the Pope is therefore a sort of Balaam, who, as a mere instrument in the divine hands, *must* bless, and *must* curse, nolens volens. Dr. Nevin's arguments were not of the usual kind, the kind that Romanists sneer at because of their inherent weakness; but if any Romanist sneered at Dr. Nevin's crushing argument against the new dogma, it was like whistling to keep up failing courage.

*Dr. Nevin's Epistle.*

That is a word of deep and precious import which St. Paul addressed to the Corinthian Church: "Ye are our epistle, written in our hearts, known and read of all men." (2 Cor. 3: 2.)

The truly apostolic man, whose life is here faintly sketched, had also a living epistle, living now, and will live successively on, doubtless, until the Master whom he served will say: "It is done." At his feet sat the men who to-day are masters in Israel, the educators of our vigorous young men and women. Where are they not? Our noble institutions of learning at Lancaster, which until recently rejoiced in the light

which still shed its soft evening radiance around them, are chiefly directed by his disciples, who are animated by his spirit, and, robed in his mantle, carry on his work, looking to the end on which his eye was ever fixed: "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day and forever." In the institutions at Tiffin the same epistle is known and read. For forty years their instructors were chiefly men whose greatest lessons were learned from him. The same is true of Ursinus College, Catawba College, Calvin Institute, Sheboygan Mission House, Palatinate College, Allentown Female College, Clarion Collegiate Institute, Juniata Collegiate Institute, and others. They are his epistle. The great majority of Reformed ministers of the Gospel, ministering to more than three hundred thousand souls, are his epistle well known and read. It is doubtful whether any other man of modern times has such a well written epistle, and so unquestionably his own.

*Personal.*

In outward appearance Dr. Nevin was truly remarkable. I wish I could give a faithful pen picture of the man, as his image stands in its singular majesty before my mental vision. Years

before I saw him, his portrait, a steel engraving, made from an excellent painting, was familiar to me. The wonderful forehead, eyes, mouth, hair—the whole contour of head and face, the expression, all—I never saw human form like it. The folded arms, so natural and graceful; the attire, so suitable that it could not be consistently otherwise; the whole person, so far as shown in the picture—aye, what a man! The picture was itself a revelation of a wonderful living original. I once saw two ministers (not Reformed) in a room where this picture was hanging over the mantel. One of them, an elderly gentleman, remarked to the other: “What a brilliant man that would have made, if he would have had early training!” How my young blood rose! You stupid! I thought to myself; you admire that great picture, but don’t know that its original knew more in his “early” days than you, old man, ever dreamed of. How I felt like telling him so, or giving him a shake. Still, he meant well, and knew no better. He was far more excusable than many of Dr. Nevin’s would-be critics.

An illustration of the effect of his personal presence on appreciative minds occurred in New

York at a general meeting of the World's Evangelical Alliance. A photographic artist, after scanning the faces and physiques of the eminent men from all parts of the globe, decided that Dr. Nevin presented the most intellectual and distinguished appearance of them all. He wished to photograph the dignified group, and waited until Dr. Nevin stood upon the platform to read his essay, so that he might have him as the most prominent and central figure in the picture. At this great convocation were present many from the old world, with whom he had enjoyed a literary acquaintance, among whom was the eminent Dr. Dorner, of Berlin, who, flushed with enthusiasm and delight, exclaimed to some of his friends: "Ich habe den Nevin gesehen!" (I have seen Nevin!)

I will not attempt further to describe the external appearance of that remarkable man, whose outward form seemed to be an almost perfect image of the great personality which it enshrined.

*A True Christian.*

It was truly said of Washington that the greatest victory he ever gained was when he conquered himself. Dr. Nevin's greatness of

intellect and immense attainments in knowledge were truly wonderful. James Buchanan said he believed him to be the greatest man in America, if not in the world. And yet he was greatest in this, that he sat humbly at the feet of Jesus and learned of Him, counting himself and all his attainments as nothing in comparison with the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ his Lord. He scarcely realized how great he was intellectually. In all his great literary efforts there is not the least sign of intentional parade of learning. His eminent greatness was scarcely equal to his childlike submission in faith to his adorable Master, whose servant he was and delighted to be. He sought only to know and expound the truth of God as he apprehended it, and was concerned only that the truth should prevail. He was not governed in his reasoning and teaching by the shibboleths of party or popular demand, but by the Spirit of truth—the Comforter, in whose abiding presence in the Church he firmly believed. His daily invocation seemed to be: “*Veni, Creator Spiritus;*” that his soul might be enlightened with celestial fire, and filled with the graces which are the gifts of God to the faithful. *Cor*

*facit theologum*—not the brain, but the heart makes the theologian, the heart full of childlike faith in God and His word,—and all else, powers and acquisitions of the mind and earthly possessions consecrated as a holy offering to the Lord.

Such was Dr. Nevin, “full of the Holy Ghost and of faith,” and so using his abundant talents that, doubtless, the Master, when He shall come to reckon with His servants, will say to him: “Well done!”

#### *His Place in History.*

There have been and are men whose names are familiar among all classes of people. It may be on account of some one peculiarity alone in the person. Certain shallow politicians are better known than many a wise statesman. Certain mountebank evangelists are more heard of and written about than the most able and faithful pastors. Their smart sermons are peddled on street corners and on railroad trains. What place will they have in history? No place at all, for they are not historical characters, but men of the passing hour, rockets that shoot high in the air for the temporary delectation of the

multitude, and then vanish like meteors out of sight. There are others whose career would receive merciful treatment, if their names were withheld from the historic page. But no, they are needed there to exhibit the dark background of history, to serve as warning to future generations, and to fill out the whole truth in the annals of the world.

There are those also, at all times, who according to their gifts and special calling have lived a useful life and are approved of God, while yet, if they have a place in history at all, it is only in connection with others, without individual prominence, as the rank and file of an army, honored in the mass, but otherwise unknown. A real historic personage is one who, under the guiding hand of God, has directed the course of history and stamped upon it his character and genius. Such were Moses, Cyrus, Alexander, Cæsar, Napoleon, Washington, St. Paul, Zwingli, Luther, and many others. Each has his place as a living organ of historic energy in the development of the human race.

Dr. Nevin is a historical character of the first order. In him there was nothing negative. A man with great natural qualities and acquisitions,



such as God could use for wise and gracious purposes, destitute of personal virtue and goodness; not such was he, but entirely consecrated to the service of God, with all his exalted talents and abilities, a leader of men, a discoverer in the vast field of truth, such as has been rarely known, with an authority in his day that was wonderful and far-reaching, and is to-day without a rival. His place in history will be among God's best and mightiest men.

*Foreign Testimony.*

As already stated, Dr. Nevin was well known and highly estimated in England and on the continent of Europe. Some of the most learned men of the English Church consulted with him, by literary correspondence, in regard to questions of the day that demanded solution. They regarded him as an exceptionally safe guide through the clouds and darkness of modern unbelief and theological vagrancy. They read his powerful productions with intense eagerness, and were not ashamed to acknowledge him their master.

In Germany, which enjoyed the pre-eminence as the land of philosophers and theologians, Dr.

Nevin was ranked among the greatest men of the time. He was there regarded as a tower of strength and defence for the true principles of Protestantism, or for the truth wherever found. The celebrated Dr. Döllinger, of Munich, who as a Roman Catholic refused to bow his neck to the decree of papal infallibility—a living library of learning,—pronounced Dr. Nevin the greatest theologian America ever produced. He read his articles in the “Mercersburg Review,” and other writings, and told an American clergyman that they were by far the best that had come to him from the western world. Foreign testimonies of a similar character could be produced in abundance, but these are sufficient to show that the extraordinary greatness and pre-eminence of the man is not the fiction of an enthusiastic biographer. His own works, however, are the best testimony to all that has been claimed for him. These are his living and speaking monuments, whose inscriptions the corrosions of time will never efface.

*The Race is Run.*

“I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth

there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness," said St. Paul when he was nearing the goal of service in the militant Church ; " which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day : and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."

The last years of Dr. Nevin's life were years of special communion with his Saviour. His last writings were mystic utterances on the deepest and most spiritual sense of God's word. It was the lamp to his feet and the light to his path. The Spirit of Truth conducted him into its profoundest depths, where Christ was revealed to his inmost consciousness as his present, living Redeemer, and verifying to his waiting spirit the truth of the blessed Gospel, in whose elucidation and defence he had devoted his long and useful life. A few years before his death he told a friend that he was giving the remainder of his days to special preparation for heaven. It was a beautiful thought, and bears no resemblance to the idea of living a worldly life until old age warns of its earthly close, when prudence suggests preparation for the solemn change. Far from it. While the true Christian is *always* preparing for heaven, the active and

vigorous part of his life means not distinctively *that*, but rather engaging, in the spirit of faith and obedience, in the work of building up Christ's kingdom among men, which involves much labor and thought in connection with the common affairs of earth. An active Christian life is service of love to mankind, as St. Paul tells us, doing good unto all men, especially to them who are of the household of faith (Gal. 6 : 10). No one can do this without at the same time holding spiritual communion with God, and looking after his own spiritual welfare. And yet, after one's strength has been spent thus in the service of God for the benefit of others, and there remains little to do but to wait for the sunset of the earthly life, the attention would properly be turned especially to one's own personal interest in the next world; though not in a spirit of self-seeking, as that would be a contradiction of the whole idea of personal religion. Dr. Nevin had given the full strength of his manhood to the cause of Christ in the world. He might have died in the harness, as in the case of many other heroes of the faith; but it pleased God to prolong his life for some years after old age compelled him to lay aside his

regular work, and this was for him a precious season of special preparation for heaven. He continued, however, to the last to manifest a deep interest in the Church in general; and while he was preparing for his own transfer to the better world, he was still, according to his strength and opportunity, helping forward the cause of Zion.

It is worthy of remark that Dr. Nevin's natural birth was on a Sunday, and that, after a period of over 83 years, on a Lord's Day he passed from the scenes of earth to the heavenly state. He came and departed on the Day of the Lord, the day of life from the dead, when the healing beams from the Sun of Righteousness burst resplendent over a dying world. It seemed as if the best of days was chosen for his entrance into the life of time and for his blessed entrance into the life immortal. Thus entered into rest, in the 84th year of his age, one of the best and greatest of Christ's servants, a prince and master in Israel, and, as I verily believe, the chief Apostle of the nineteenth century.

This biographical sketch would be still more imperfect than it would be otherwise, if I failed to add a small portion at least of Dr. Nevin's testimony in favor of a movement on the part of the two Reformed Churches in this country, which has lately ripened in a federal union.

Such a union was effected by the two General Synods of the "Reformed Church in the United States" and the "Reformed Church in America," with wonderful unanimity, and with great rejoicings and thanksgivings to God. This happy result was accomplished after several years of preliminary work, much and frequent counsel and earnest prayer. It was a glorious day for Zion when it was announced that these two ancient ecclesiastical organizations thus declared their relationship as being members of one family, and decided to become more nearly one externally, in order that the internal "unity of the Spirit" might be more fully realized.

What was Dr. Nevin's contribution to this result? I have already spoken of his sermon on "Catholic Unity," in which he presented thoughts on the Church which it would be well for every one to read and carefully ponder. The sermon was "delivered at the opening of the

Triennial Convention of the Reformed Protestant Dutch and German Reformed Churches, at Harrisburg, Pa., Aug. 8, 1844," that is, forty-six years ago. Parts of the sermon read as if delivered in June, 1890, when these same members of the old ecclesiastical household flowed together and were made one. Any person familiar with that discourse must perceive that it was seed which could not return void, that it took root and produced blade, ear and the full corn in the ear. The closing words of that great sermon will be a fitting close to this little volume.

"In view of all that has thus far been said, we may now be prepared, respected and beloved brethren in the ministry and eldership of the Reformed Church, to estimate aright the weight of the occasion, by which we are brought together this day. The very object of this convention is to bring into closer visible union the two denominations we have been appointed to represent. Apart altogether from the counsels and action of the convention itself, the simple fact that these bodies have been engaged to enter into the friendly arrangement, by which it is called to meet, deserves to be regarded with special interest. In the midst of the religious divisions and

dissensions that are abroad in the land, it is cheering to find in any quarter an active movement in favor of the opposite interest. May we not trust that the measure will be owned and blessed of God, and that through His blessing it may be followed in time to come with consequences of good, far more vast than we have power now to imagine?

“It is true, indeed, that the Reformed Dutch and German Reformed Churches in this country can hardly be regarded as different denominations, and certainly not as different *sects*, in any right sense of the term. They have been from the beginning substantially the same Church; different national branches only of the one great communion of the *Reformed*, as gloriously represented in the ever memorable Synod of Dort. The faith of Switzerland, the faith of the Palatinate and the faith of Holland, in the sixteenth century, were emphatically one faith. Transplanted to this country too, the same Churches have been closely related from the first; in a certain sense borne upon the knees, and nourished from the breast, of the same compassionate mother . . . Nor has the sense of this relationship been lost since . . . It is well therefore that



now in the end we should be permitted to rejoice in the prospect of a communion, from this time forward, more intimate and full. It is well that the claims of our kindred life have come to make themselves so felt on both sides, that we are brought thus openly to recognize their force, and give visible expression to the one spirit by which we are consciously bound together. The Church at large have reason to rejoice in this union. It is something won for the cause of Catholic unity, in the broadest sense, that these two divisions of the Reformed Church should thus embrace each other in the presence of the whole world, and proclaim themselves outwardly as well as inwardly the same; 'one body, and one Spirit, even as we are called in one hope of our calling.' . . .

"It would seem to lie in the very nature of the case, that Churches so related, historically, ecclesiastically, and geographically, as the Reformed Dutch and German Reformed Churches in this country, should find occasion for common counsel and common action, in many respects. By wise co-operation they may surely expect to make themselves felt with more effect in the land at large, than they are likely to be by

standing wholly separate and apart. The interests represented in the two Churches are in all material respects the same; and this itself would seem to require that they should regard them as a common cause, and combine their strength in carrying them forward . . .

“I may be permitted in conclusion to say, that the time has come, when the Churches of the Reformation generally have need to seek among themselves a closer correspondence and alliance than has hitherto prevailed. The work of the Reformation is not yet complete. In every movement of this kind the direction taken by the general mind is liable in the end to become more or less extreme; and the consequence is then a reaction towards the abandoned error, which is often more dangerous to the cause of truth than all the opposition it had to surmount in the beginning . . . What is wanted is a republication of the principles of the Reformation, not in the letter merely that killeth, but in the living spirit of the men who wielded them with such vast effect in the sixteenth century. Never was there a more solemn call upon the Reformed Churches to clothe themselves fully with the power of the life that is enshrined in their an-

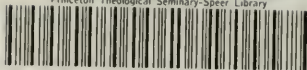
cient symbols. And surely, in these circumstances, when the very foundations of their common faith are threatened, not by a casual or transient danger, but by a force that is lodged deep in the very constitution of the age, and may be said to carry in itself the gathered strength of centuries; when questions of vital import, which were supposed to have been settled long ago are again to be encountered and resolved, on an issue that involves the very existence of these Churches themselves; when in one word the vast struggle of the Reformation is to be taken up in its original spirit and carried forward through a crisis that may be considered final and decisive to its proper consummation; surely, I say, in circumstances like these, the Churches in question should feel themselves engaged to narrow as much as possible the measure of their separation, and strengthen the consciousness of their unity. The interests by which they are divided are few and small as compared with those that should bind them together. The glory of God and the honor of His truth, as well as their own common safety, require that they should stand out to the view of the world, not as many, but as one, *the Church*, (not Churches,) of the Reformation, the

body of Christ, 'the pillar and ground of the truth,' one body and one Spirit, even as they are called in one hope of their calling. May the great Head of the Church Himself interpose, in ways that to His own wisdom shall seem best, to conduct the hearts and counsels of His people to this result; and in the meantime bestow richly upon us who are here present the glorious power of His grace, that we may be enabled to be faithful to this high interest, especially in the exercise of the trust now committed to our hands, maintaining the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace."

THE END.



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