

The Benefit of Having a Worthy Opponent

How the Theology of Seventeenth-Century Puritans Can Be Complemented by the Nineteenth-Century German Thought Known as the Mercersburg Theology

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CHAPTER SEVEN

Making Out One's Will

This chapter will survey both Mercersburg's and Puritanism's views of spiritual change. Sanctification is the Christian doctrine describing how spiritual transformation takes place. It can address questions such as how a person becomes more like Christ, from where holiness comes, in what capacity the law is useful as well as what exactly the role of the Holy Spirit is. The conclusions one reaches will reflect the initial presuppositions regarding human nature, the extent of the corruption introduced at the fall of Adam, and the extent to which God takes initiative.

In this matter of how the human will is sanctified, it is more difficult to construct a model where both camps complement each other. Nevin relied much on German philosophy to develop his presuppositions about human nature, while the writings of the Puritans are laced with far more Scripture and are more likely to regard God's decrees as directly formative in sanctification. This means that Nevin and the Puritans were aiming at different goals. Nevin's goal was to achieve a balance between the subjective and objective in the universe, and the Puritans sought to enjoy communion with God. These characterizations are not mutually exclusive. Nevin taught about loving and communing with God, and the Puritans were not consciously given over to extreme subjectivism.

Unpacking Nevin's Perspective

Nevin held that all created life has two aspects – an individual or single and also a general or universal.¹ A recurrent theme in Mercersburg theology is that the perfection of two opposing factors is found to be the union of both. Also, form and substance must be found together in order for either to have meaning. So for instance, Nevin wrote that “the Ideal can have no reality except in the form of the

¹ John Williamson Nevin, “Human Freedom,” *The Mercersburg Theology*, ed. James Hastings Nichols (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), 286.

actual, and the actual can have no truth save as it is filled with the presence of the Ideal.”² Without an inseparable union of the two, there would be no proper subsistence of either.

He frequently referred to a plant as an example. A plant exists both as an individual or particular specimen, but also as a participant in generic plant life. “It becomes a particular plant or tree, in fact only as it is felt to be the revelation of a life more comprehensive than its own, a life that appears in all plants and trees.”³ He sees humans the same way – every individual person being a single life but at the same time participating in the life of the human race. No

Biblical warrant is given for this understanding of human life.

This concept particularly comes into play in Nevin’s understanding of the incarnation whereby Christ established a generic humanity which is different from Adam’s and of which all Christians may partake. It has been demonstrated previously that the concept of Christ’s generic humanity was not foreign to Puritan divines.

Scripture is not plentifully employed when Nevin explains that a human also, like the plant noted above, participates in life that is at the same time single and general. An individual is more than nature but is organically one with it.⁴

In considering how change comes about in a Christian, it becomes necessary to define consciousness which is explained as the ability to apprehend the particular or singular in the presence of the universal. Both aspects of human life flow together in every act of the will. They cannot be separated. Personality, then, is “the power of a strictly universal life, revealing itself through an individual existence as its necessary medium.” It equates moral freedom.⁵ The individual life must with a full sense of its own individual nature, possessing power to cleave to general life to which it belongs, be filled with that general life and ruled by it. So moral freedom includes “the *single* will moving with self-conscious free activity in the orbit of the *general* will.”⁶ Personality becomes moral when knowledge of God is acquired.⁷

It is difficult not to interpret Nevin’s assessment of human personality against a seeming impersonal backdrop when such language about general life is used. This differs from the Puritans’ very personal ideas of interaction with God. Some essays leave one wondering how God fits into the picture, although restraint is

² Ibid.

³ Ibid., 287.

⁴ Ibid., 288.

⁵ Ibid., 289-290.

⁶ Ibid., 290.

⁷ John Williamson Nevin, “Lectures on Moral Philosophy delivered by Rev. John W. Nevin, D.D., President of Marshall College,” transcribed by Oliver Y. Everhart, Spring Vacation, 1853, 70.

needed in order to not demand a full-orbed systematic theology in each essay. In this sense, each essay must be interpreted according to the whole of Nevin's writings, many of which are difficult to digest when one is used to reading the Scripture-laced arguments of the Puritans and lacks a familiarity with the German philosophy which developed into Nevin's scheme of interpreting the world. Among those who influenced Nevin were Schelling and Hegel as well as his first associate at Mercersburg, Frederick Augustus Rauch.

Freedom or independence has no place in the realm of nature because God upholds and carries it forward by its laws. Individual independence requires "the light of intelligence and the power of choice," not just movement produced by the force of natural law such as regarding blind instincts. Consciousness is above nature and therefore no longer blind. Possessing intelligence capable of exiting blind instinct opens the door for subjective independence. One is no longer an object acted upon by outside forces but becomes a subject in possession of self.⁸ "Consciousness in absolute subjection to nature would be, indeed, a species of bondage that might be said to be even worse than that of nature itself."⁹ The natural will is not free but is driven by desire, inclination or passion.¹⁰ Thus, "to be free we must govern ourselves; renounce self that we may find our true nature; die that we may live."¹¹ True liberty comes by way of embracing duties established by God.

Nevin clarifies that possessing such intelligence is not all that is required for independence. There must also be self-control or an embracing of some form of law voluntarily. But "if the intelligence were ruled and actuated not by nature but by some other intelligence in ... [an] irresistible way" the result would be bondage. While in other places Nevin strongly refutes Arminianism, in this context he is adamant about maintaining the complete freedom of the individual so as to preserve his philosophical structure of interpreting human life. Even if the divine will entered the conscious life and created absolute necessity to submit to it, acting on it from the outside "without the power of self-impulse," independence would be compromised and ruined.¹²

There sometimes appears a significant contrast with the Puritan emphasis on the will having been hopelessly polluted by Adam's sin and in need of sovereign grace to make an initial choice to act on the will to transform it. At other times Nevin speaks of human depravity and of the necessity for regeneration before one can conform the will to divine knowledge.¹³ And in questioning how the will can renounce sin when the self-knowledge required is itself the product of the

⁸ Human Freedom, 291.

⁹ Ibid., 291-292.

¹⁰ Everhart notes, 68.

¹¹ Ibid., 92.

¹² Human Freedom, 292.

¹³ Everhart notes, 69.

will, Nevin reveals that “God is the foundation of the change.”¹⁴ His Spirit must produce change in believers. At regeneration, the divine law becomes an active power in the will’s choosing power.¹⁵

These doctrines are to varying degrees affirmed elsewhere in Nevin’s writings, but how all of his tenets fit together is not easy to discern. What is plain is that the complete independence of the human will must be preserved, yet true freedom cannot exist apart from the human volition choosing to conform to the universal law. He holds an uncomfortable tension between the corrupting power of sin and the delivering power of grace on the one hand and the desire to present man as a totally free agent on the other hand.

While Nevin insists the will has a self-moving nature and is independent of all outward restraint, he introduces a sense wherein it is bound by law just as matter is. However, whereas in the subhuman world law seems to act of its own power, in humans law becomes entangled with and collaborates with the will which it necessitates and binds.¹⁶ Conscience is the ability of the law to make its authority felt in the mind, not just as an outward or foreign force.¹⁷ So the will commands but is also required to obey, and then it sits in judgment over itself and executes sentence when necessary. Nevin defines conscience then as “the knowing of God brought into man’s knowing of himself, and made to be thus an inseparable part of his proper spiritual being and life.”¹⁸

Referring to Kant, Nevin insists that the autonomy of the will must be maintained. A Puritan-based reader will at least appreciate how under Nevin’s perspective, a person is a responsible actor who can only escape slavery to sin by choosing what is right. Men and women, according to Nevin, were made to be free. The first crucial part of freedom is that the will is autonomic, free to choose one thing or its opposite without any extraneous power constraining it in either nature of spirit.¹⁹ Nevin would assert that all of nature is dependent on God, but on this topic in the philosophical work on “Human Freedom” he fails to depict a believer as dependent on God for grace to choose what is right and good. The will must be the fountain of its own activity, carrying “in itself the principle of its own action.” “There can be no liberty where there is no subjective independence.”²⁰ “God’s liberty does not restrain or limit the liberty of man. It is the principle rather, and the source from which this springs. Man’s liberty, as far as it is such, is in and by the liberty of God, which shows how the idea of predestination after all

¹⁴ Ibid., 83.

¹⁵ Glenn A. Hewitt, *Regeneration and Morality: A Study of Charles Finney, Charles Hodge, John W. Nevin, and Horace Bushnell* (Brooklyn: Carlson Publishing Inc., 1991), 113.

¹⁶ John Williamson Nevin, “The Wonderful Nature of Man” *The Mercersburg Review* 11 (July 1859): 335.

¹⁷ Ibid., 336.

¹⁸ Ibid., 337.

¹⁹ Human Freedom, 292.

²⁰ Ibid., 293.

involves no restraint upon freedom.”²¹ Whatever Nevin meant by the word predestination here, understand that he rejected supralapsarianism because he saw such divine decrees as denying human freedom.²²

In class lectures on Moral Philosophy, however, Nevin did stress dependence on God. In describing duty owed to God, He focused on the Trinity. The Father is the ground of all life, so believers are bound to acknowledge and practice dependence on Him. Fear of God involves reverence which is resting on Him as eternally true. The human spirit requires illumination, renovation and salvation which come from the Holy Spirit. Believers have a duty to seek and accept the grace which is brought within reach.²³

Recall that the Mercersburg school is concerned to unite both the subjective and objective. Having presented the subjective side of freedom, next one must consider the objective side. There is an objective, universal law “by which the individual will is of right bound, and without obedience to which it can never be true to its own nature.”²⁴ All life is a union of the independent subject and the universal law.

What is missing in Nevin’s work on “Human Freedom” is a sense that this relationship to law is personal, that is, that the law is representative of God, a revelation of His character, or that law is a tool God uses in the process of bringing believers into union with Himself. Life and law are treated as principles existing independently of God. But then in his class notes on Moral Philosophy he explains that morality grounds itself in the recognition that the will of God is exhibited as absolute law to the human will.²⁵

Nevin explained that Law is an Idea and not an abstraction. According to Nevin, law carries with it necessity and universality. It is absolute and does not derive its authority or force from individual wills. It is not dependent on the world for character. Law has no existence apart from the actual world. In this sense it cannot be abstract but exists only if it is expressed in form. The law is to be associated with the Ideal life of nature. As such “it cannot be sundered from the actual manifestation in which this consists; and as the absolute truth and right of the moral universe, it cannot subsist except through the consciousness of the thinking and willing subjects of which this universe is composed.” “Abstracted from all subjective intelligence, its objective reality is reduced to a nullity.”²⁶

²¹ Everhart notes, 73.

²² Hewitt, 122.

²³ Everhart notes, 168-169.

²⁴ Human Freedom, 293.

²⁵ John Williamson Nevin, “Moral Philosophy by John W. Nevin, D.D.,” transcribed by Henry Miller Heilman (1859), 75.

²⁶ Human Freedom, 295.

He does cite Hooker as locating law “in the bosom of God,” but “not so, however as if God might be supposed, in the exercise of any private arbitrary will of his own, to have devised and ordained it as a proper scheme after which to fashion the order of the universe.” “The universality of the law excludes, as we have already seen, the idea of all merely private or particular will, even though it were conceived to be in this form the will of God himself.” “God is not the author of the law, as something standing out of himself and beyond himself; he does not *make* it, as a man might frame an instrument to serve some purpose which he has.”²⁷ Neither does the law in any sense make God as though it were a power above or before Him which determines His existence in any way. It does have “its being only in God and from God.” “It is the necessary form of God’s infinitely wise and holy will, as exercised in the creation and support of the actual universe, considered both as nature and spirit.”²⁸ So while God cannot be said to arbitrarily fashion law as a tool, Nevin explains that it is resident in the divine will and identical with it. Again, the concept he wishes to avoid is that the law is some form of arbitrary decree of God. He said that the law does not rest on something outside of itself but is necessary and infinite in its nature.²⁹

The organic nature of relationships in reality are a priority for Nevin to preserve. He claims that law can only reach the individual by passing through the organic system and not as singular and exclusive revelation. But by saying that law is necessary and infinite, is he putting law in the place of God? He defined law as “a power in and over things and persons, determining by which they are held together.”³⁰ The world subsists by Law which exists independently of things and persons. Law is concrete and unchangeable. For Nevin, to know God is to know the law. The two are very closely related. He regarded God as necessary and having complete liberty.³¹ He spoke of the revelation on Mount Sinai, “from which celestial summit then, the several precepts of the Decalogue descend with necessary inward sequence into the bosom of our common human life; not leaving their Divine source behind them, not being parted from it at a single point in any way; but carrying it with them, and having it in them all along, as the centre and inmost core of their universal substance from first to last.”³² Therefore, outward compliance with God’s law without fearing Him is not proper obedience because it fails to regard His presence in the Law. The Bible reveals an order – the fear of the Lord produces wisdom, and wisdom is the fountainhead of all else that belongs to the soul.³³

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid., 296.

²⁹ Heilman notes, 85.

³⁰ Ibid., 88.

³¹ Ibid., 89.

³² John Williamson Nevin, “Bible Anthropology,” *The Mercersburg Review* 14 (July 1877): 334. This article is the most heavily laden with Scripture of any article consulted for the present paper.

³³ Ibid., 337.

Law has its authority and necessity in its own nature because it is the will of God manifesting itself through the consciousness of man. A general consciousness of God is not the ground of morality, for that can be had by those outside Christianity. "Christianity holds in the life of Christ as a new element brought into the human condition" a living power or force that extends to the whole consciousness "imparting to every portion of it a peculiar spirit or form."³⁴

The will cannot be autonomous and the fountain of its own action while at the same time bound under necessity to a power broader than itself or a force that comes from outside itself such as the objective authority of the law. Nevin explained that the "Thou shalt" statements of the law mean that independence of the will is sin, but slavish external compliance with those laws has no real value in the eyes of the law either.³⁵ The law has no power to bring light or freedom or strength or peace to the soul – only sin, death and wrath.

By education in the law the will is trained to self-govern, but any influence on the will from without must be conditioned by an energy working within. So learning the law is an occasion for change but not the true cause. Without education spiritual development fails, but education alone cannot complete the process. It is a condition of spiritual development and not the ground of it.³⁶ The very life of Christ must enter the soul.³⁷ The pursuit of understanding is necessary to evaluate and govern feelings which would determine an individual's moral sense if allowed.³⁸ Developing a sense of ethics involves both willing and knowing, and one starts naturally from his or her own experience, but by reason advances beyond that initial stage.³⁹

How can the tension between liberty and necessary authority be resolved? The two must be placed in union as the two poles of a magnet are in union without surrendering their properties.⁴⁰ To illustrate, Nevin leads the reader to imagine a planet gaining a self-consciousness. Before it gained such consciousness it was under natural law and was not free. Once consciousness is achieved, the planet may decide to break from its orbit and become a comet. However, that action would not constitute true freedom. "Only the power of choice making it possible for it to become a comet, but yet spontaneously embracing the true planetary motion in fact, identified thus with the sense of law, could constitute it the subject of freedom." He asserts that law can come "to its proper expression only in the independence of the subject" while "the independence of the subject [has] no reality save under the form of obedience to the law." Man, says Nevin, was made for freedom, and freedom only comes when the two polar forces are in union,

³⁴ Heilman notes, 91.

³⁵ Human Freedom, 297.

³⁶ Heilman notes, 48-49.

³⁷ Hewitt, 113.

³⁸ Heilman notes, 63.

³⁹ Ibid., 66.

⁴⁰ Human Freedom, 298.

and the will consciously submits to law.⁴¹ “There can be no liberty that is not holy, and there can be no holiness that is not free.”⁴² The difficulty with Nevin’s position is that he fails to explain it in the light of the Scriptures which depict man as unable to freely choose to submit to law.

In a further effort to avoid alleged abstract decrees from God being the source of salvation, Nevin presses for the necessary union of the individual and general as being organic and not mechanical, as he pictured assumed submission to decrees of God to have been. He believed that the will would move under its own volition to submit to the law, apart from external compulsion. Since the individual is the expression of the general life of the universe, for the will to obey the law it is obeying “its own true constitution.”⁴³ The idea of holiness being rooted in personal communion with God is not introduced into this context.

Nevin defined moral philosophy as “The science of the agreement of the human will with the Law of reason, embodied in its own nature,” or “The science of the soul’s well-being, as wrought by the will coming into union with God.”⁴⁴

So in the end the will is ruled by something beyond itself but is simultaneously autonomic. Nevin wrote, “The law so enters the subject as to become within him a continually self-originated obligation, while his private will is so comprehended in the law as to find in it no foreign constraint whatever.”⁴⁵ Freedom would be destroyed by liberty turning into licentiousness or by authority becoming despotic. To be either wholly bound or wholly unbound is slavery.⁴⁶ Christianity frees the human mind to go higher than the self.⁴⁷ Virtue is to be developed for higher purposes than merely as a tool to find happiness.⁴⁸

The law finally must be recognized as “a necessary constituent of freedom itself.”⁴⁹ It is not to be regarded as an abstraction but as the “actual constitution of the world.” Further, he argues that “The imagination of a mechanical system of notions and rules brought near to the mind from abroad, to be accepted by it in a blind way, on the ground of authority conceived to be divine, is wholly aside from the character of the gospel.”⁵⁰ This leaves one schooled in Puritan theology wondering, is God the source of the Law? Is He transcendent? If He is, then is the Law not above the world rather than a part of it? Is God not depicted in Scripture as taking initiative to draw individuals into communion with Himself?

⁴¹ Ibid., 299.

⁴² Everhart notes, 76.

⁴³ Human Freedom, 300.

⁴⁴ Everhart notes, 9.

⁴⁵ Human Freedom, 300.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 300-301.

⁴⁷ Everhart notes, 6.

⁴⁸ Heilman notes, 57.

⁴⁹ Human Freedom, 303.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 304.

Nevin does acknowledge God's transcendence.⁵¹ And he proclaims morality as "the identity of the human will with the divine law."⁵² God is the ground of all law.⁵³

He claims that virtue cannot be defined apart from revelation.⁵⁴ Christian morality contains its own interior, or organically produced principles in Christ.⁵⁵ In contrast to the absence of references to God and Christ in his work on human freedom, in his notes on moral philosophy Nevin stated that "Christian Morality can stand only in the consciousness of communion with Christ. He is the truth and the life," and we can share truth and life only to the extent that Christ is actualized in us.⁵⁶ A conversion is required which changes the totality of a person from the most central germ of being to every aspect of life.⁵⁷ This requires repentance and sorrow for sin and a desire to have the soul purged.⁵⁸

The will and knowledge must be considered together. The will cannot act without knowledge, but knowing has an aim or an end which is set by the will. Will has a necessity in itself that is not from nature or derived from man, but is from God.⁵⁹ In the progress toward completeness or perfection, education, the influence of society and a desire for happiness will all exercise influence.⁶⁰ But renouncing self is a part of the perfecting process so that one can serve others. If life becomes a quest merely for happiness, then the subject will not connect with anything beyond self.⁶¹ Sin is the obstacle which opposes such spiritual development.⁶² True love must take over the will, and wisdom which is the fountain of truth must inhabit the understanding. Love in turn produces delight and wisdom leads to gratification. "The will and the understanding now, we can see at once," Nevin wrote, "owe all their worth to their contents respectively as thus described."⁶³ Without those contents both would be hollow, empty and powerless. Love and wisdom or goodness and truth originate from the infinite and not from human finite will or understanding.⁶⁴ Glenn Hewitt has observed that Nevin's consideration of the will and understanding as an inseparable pair set him apart from his contemporary Hodge who focused on acquiring a right understanding of the law as the primary factor in sanctification, and Finney who

⁵¹ Everhart notes, 10.

⁵² Ibid., 17.

⁵³ Ibid., 66.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 7.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 8.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 12.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 83.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Heilman notes, 66-67.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 68-69.

⁶¹ Ibid., 71-72.

⁶² Ibid., 70.

⁶³ Biblical Anthropology, 342.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 345-346.

focused on the will as the faculty responsible for making moral decisions.⁶⁵ In Nevin's opinion, Finney focused too much on the human side of salvation, and Hodge too much on the divine. He held that Hodge placed the activity of salvation outside of the human sphere where it was all determined by divine decrees, making religion into abstract spiritualism.⁶⁶ Instead, Nevin pressed for a union of human autonomy and divine law. He saw the incarnation as the key event in history as it brought the divine life into the world. This makes the church, as Hewitt wrote, "the organic extension of the incarnation through human history," and sanctification can only rightly take place within it.⁶⁷ On this point, the Puritans did not lay as much emphasis.

After working elsewhere very hard to preserve freedom of choice for the human will, in his article "Biblical Anthropology" Nevin plainly indicates that all creatures are dependent on God and cannot exist for a moment apart from what God supplies, even in terms of this love and wisdom. He says that the chief end of man is union and communion with God.⁶⁸ Man's chief fallacy is to think his thoughts and words are his own and to reject the idea of dependence on God. In that "Biblical Anthropology" article Nevin lists many Scriptures (e.g., 1 John 5:11, 12-20; John 14:6; Acts 17:28; Psalm 36:9) to demonstrate that humans are not life itself. Only Christ who is in full oneness with God has life in Himself (John 5:26). Therefore we can turn only to Him to have full life, which includes divine love and divine wisdom imparted to believers.⁶⁹ There is only one true love and one real wisdom, just as there is only one life, all absolutely and infinitely in God. God alone is love. God alone is wisdom/Word. Love, wisdom and life are found in those to whom God communicates them. However, man has the ability to reject the higher life from God. When the wicked cut themselves off from God in this way, they receive only enough light from God to "maintain their mental powers in mere formal existence," in the end having only corruption, thick darkness and moral death. They are in reality joined with hell while still in the body.⁷⁰ Nevin believed that in humanity as originally created, understanding and will were in perfect union, so that what a person thought she acted. After the fall understanding became more a product of science and reflection because it was severed from the will. Thus it became possible to think and know truth but to choose the opposite.⁷¹ In salvation, then, God reunites the will and understanding.

For those who do receive life from God, regeneration happens first in the will and secondly in the understanding. To this the Old Testament was pointing with passages such as Ezekiel 36:26-27, foretelling the gift of a new spirit and a heart

⁶⁵Hewitt, 107.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 121.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Biblical Anthropology, 347.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 349, 350.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 352-353.

⁷¹ Hewitt, 113.

of flesh. Nevin associates the new heart with a new will and likewise a new spirit with new understanding. Both are regenerated by the entrance of the Holy Spirit.⁷² Wisdom is a key element in the transformation. Nevin cites it as being “that which is highest in man, that which inmosty joins man with God in the life of his will.”⁷³ The first motion toward regeneration is in the understanding which has capacity to see and own what is true.⁷⁴ For the human will to be free it must “move in the orbit of God’s will.” “The life of the Son of man entering into men is that alone, by which they can ever attain here to their original birthright.”⁷⁵ In the “Biblical Anthropology” article, what is not emphasized is the cross. As Hewitt summarizes Nevin’s view of conversion, he included repentance for sin and recovery of conscience without mentioning the cross.⁷⁶ Emphasis is placed on the completing of the ethical nature in humans by introducing a “higher life” which liberates a person from rule by the law of sin and produces true freedom. This would make sanctification, according to Hewitt, “the process by which the Christian center of the believer increasingly penetrates his or her whole life.”⁷⁷ Participation in the life of Christ is strengthened by participation in the Lord’s Supper. According to Hewitt at least to some degree Nevin rejected substitutionary atonement because it seemed to be an external transaction which would not fit into a focus on the internal life of the individual. However, there are places where Nevin does speak of propitiation and atonement as necessary.⁷⁸

Nevin addresses sanctification in his theology lectures and presented it as growing out of one’s union with Christ and thus flowing from Christ, although it cannot be accomplished without human activity.⁷⁹ It is dependent on the Holy Spirit and mediated through the Word and the sacraments.⁸⁰ Prayer, he clarified, is not a means like Word and sacrament, but it prepares one to benefit from them. The sacraments will not act on the person who lacks repentance and faith.⁸¹ He specifically notes the need for atonement, saying that the mind cannot be brought into harmony with the law until reconciliation to God takes place, and atonement is the only way for reconciliation to occur.⁸²

As this chapter turns its attention toward three Puritan works related to sanctification, it becomes clear that a great deal of the stated theology to be found there is congruent with that which Nevin presents. However, Nevin’s reliance on German philosophy at times adds a layer of confusion leading one to

⁷² Biblical Anthropology, 363.

⁷³ Ibid., 357.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 360.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 364.

⁷⁶ Hewitt, 113.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 114.

⁷⁸ See *Dr. Nevin’s Theology*, compiled and edited by William H. Erb (Reading, PA: I. M. Beaver, Publisher, 1913), 259.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 313.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 314.

⁸¹ Ibid., 315.

⁸² Ibid., 317.

ask whether Nevin uses terms with the same meaning that the Puritans did, whether there is benefit to introducing the German philosophy, or whether Nevin creates unnecessary contradictions or tensions in his efforts to interpret Scripture through the lens of German philosophy and hold two opposing factors in tension, or whether his writings emphasized different elements depending on his intended audience or perhaps reflect a progressive development in his thinking. Regardless of any explanation that might be offered, the resulting difficulty in grasping Nevin's positions lacks the coherent quality of the Puritan message of turning to the cross for salvation. However, considering Nevin's well-developed doctrine of participation in the very life of Christ introduces a complementary emphasis into the Puritan arena which is focused on the cross.

It is easy to see how Nevin has drawn great criticism from Biblically-grounded heirs of Puritan theology, for when reading a work such as "Human Freedom," there is much philosophy and little emphasis on affection for God. But if one continues to read Nevin, such as in the class notes on Moral Philosophy, a much different perspective is to be gained. Nevin taught that no love is moral unless it includes love to God. "Love is the principle of all moral actions," he said.⁸³ Conscience, he explained, is the law of God written on the heart. "The truth must dwell in the will as its form," becoming a personal attribute of the individual. The will should engage in an earnest search to know Truth and then adjust itself to the truth and embrace it. The conscience sets the authority of God's will in the consciousness of the subject.⁸⁴

Nevin's notes on ethics were practical. He forbade steamboat racing or balloon racing because of the risk to sacred human life. He urged temperance in diet, avoidance of sexual temptation so that sexual desires could focus on their true end, reserving and training the mind for worthy ends, curbing worldly amusements which can yield personal gratification but fail to help a person serve others, avoiding love of money, and refraining from lies of politeness, benevolence or diplomacy, etc. He denounced slavery because he forbade treating other humans as means versus ends. Distinction between the sexes was to be maintained because each is rooted in distinction in personality.⁸⁵

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⁸³ Human Freedom, 85.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 87.

⁸⁵ Hewitt, 117-118.

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