

August 2013

# Philip Schaff's Contentious Histories in Antebellum America: A Papist and a Pantheist

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PHILIP SCHAFF'S CONTENTIOUS HISTORIES IN ANTEBELLUM AMERICA:  
A PAPIST AND A PANTHEIST

by

Andrew White

A Thesis Submitted in  
Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts  
in History

at

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

August 2013

ABSTRACT  
A PANTHEIST AND A PAPIST:  
PHILIP SCHAFF'S CONTENTIOUS HISTORIES IN ANTEBELLUM AMERICA

by

Andrew White

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2013  
Under the Supervision of Professor J. David Hoeveler

Born in Switzerland and educated in Germany, Philip Schaff arrived in the United States in 1844 to be a professor at Mercersburg Theological Seminary. Evangelical Christianity dominated the American religious landscape at the time, but Schaff's histories of the Christian Church opposed the hegemony. His reviewers criticized him for being a papist and a pantheist because his un-American Christianity seemed dangerous to evangelicalism. Nevertheless, his works proved to be read widely across many denominations as well as among academic and non-academic readers.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I owe a great many thanks to my adviser, Dr. Hoeveler, for providing support and feedback throughout the process. Many more thanks go to Charise, my lovely wife, for putting up with the many hours hunched over the computer as I slaved away at the thesis.

## CHAPTER I

## THEOLOGY AND HISTORY FOR ALL

*The Evangelical Consensus and Philip Schaff*

Protestant Christianity in mid-nineteenth-century America was rich in depth and diversity, and in many ways could be considered as different from the Protestantism of the Reformation as the Reformers were from medieval Catholics.<sup>1</sup> As the hegemony of Congregationalism and Presbyterianism fell apart, antebellum America saw an explosion of new churches within the developing evangelical tradition that preached “a religion of the people, by the people, and for the people.”<sup>2</sup> While evangelicalism during this period cannot by any means be considered unified in theology, purpose, or vision, it dominated the American religious landscape. Charles Buck’s *Theological Dictionary*, the benchmark of its kind, gave only nine lines to the definition of “evangelical” in an 1831 edition. Historians Matthew Bowman and Samuel Brown assert that Buck’s definitions of other strains of Christianity, however, remained overshadowed by evangelicalism’s preeminence in America.<sup>3</sup> In 1800, ninety percent of Americans had no religious

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<sup>1</sup> Mark Noll, *America’s God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (Oxford University Press, 2002), 3.

<sup>2</sup> D. G. Hart, *John Williamson Nevin: High-Church Calvinist* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2005), 26.

<sup>3</sup> Matthew Bowman and Samuel Brown, “Reverend Buck’s Theological Dictionary and the Struggle to Define American Evangelicalism, 1802-1851,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 29, no. 3 (Fall 2009): 460.

affiliation.<sup>4</sup> By 1860, at least eighty-five percent of churches in America were evangelical in character.<sup>5</sup> Upwards of sixty percent of Americans were in some way connected to an evangelical church by this time. The diversity among evangelicals contributed to their meteoric rise. Evangelicals in every geographic, cultural, and social locale adapted their methods and theologies in order to spread the Gospel.<sup>6</sup>

The umbrella of evangelicalism covered a myriad of theologies. Charles Finney represents one end of the spectrum of evangelicalism. Historian Curtis D. Johnson labels evangelicals like Finney as antiformalists. They pursued an emotional faith and a country where every person had experienced a conversion. Fellow evangelicals Nathaniel Taylor and Lyman Beecher modified their Calvinist beliefs to fit in a democratic society by emphasizing individual freedom and autonomy. Evangelicalism transformed Christianity into a private, individualistic religion, and Christians interpreted the Bible without guidance from the Church. Finney abandoned Calvinism altogether and advocated that people were the sole agents in matters of their salvation. In contrast to the Calvinist doctrines that dominated eighteenth-century America, most evangelicals, like Finney, held to Arminian theological conceptions. Rather than baptism or predestination as the vehicles of salvation, believers on their own accord chose to follow Jesus or the world. While some evangelicals remained Calvinists, the majority of evangelicals preached free will rather than the doctrine of election.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Curtis D. Johnson, *Redeeming America: Evangelicals and the Road to the Civil War* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1993), 10.

<sup>5</sup> Noll, 12.

<sup>6</sup> Johnson, 4, 10-11.

<sup>7</sup> Johnson, 7-8, 10, 58-59.



Because Finney, like many others, believed free will determined their salvation, he orchestrated impressive tent revivals to preach to as many as possible so that any who came could be saved. These meetings would last days or weeks and sometimes had services extend throughout the entire day. Finney relied on these long meetings to preach the gospel in conjunction with emotional music, testimonies, people who would pray for the souls of those within the tent walls, and an “anxious seat” for potential converts to make the choice.<sup>8</sup> These sorts of prolific revivals spread throughout the country and prompted John Williamson Nevin, a prominent critic of evangelicalism, to refer to these techniques as “quackery within the Church.”<sup>9</sup>

Not all evangelicals relied on Finney’s techniques or doctrines. On the other side of the evangelical spectrum stood the formalists, who desired to have orderly, theologically orthodox churches led by educated ministers. These churches grew out of Calvinist origins and argued that the Bible illuminated how to live morally in all areas of life. Formalist evangelicals strove for a country transformed by the Gospel.<sup>10</sup>

Evangelicalism’s tentacles even reached Charles Hodge, a conservative Presbyterian professor at Princeton. He claimed that no new ideas entered Princeton in his half-century tenure, and even he could not escape evangelicalism, according to historian Mark Noll. While Hodge rejected Finney’s emotionally focused revivals, he

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<sup>8</sup> Johnson, 60-61.

<sup>9</sup> John Williamson Nevin, *The Anxious Bench* (Chambersburg, PA: Weekly Messenger, 1843), 20.

<sup>10</sup> Johnson, 7.

nevertheless exemplified certain evangelical characteristics. Most notably, for example, Hodge used Common Sense reasoning to underscore his arguments.<sup>11</sup>

Despite differences from within the spectrum, a core consensus existed among evangelicals. Evangelicalism emerged from the Revolutionary War as a synthesis of Christianity with republicanism and Common Sense reasoning. Republicanism brought to Christianity two ideas: the fear of tyranny and the demand of liberty. Common Sense reasoning originated as a Scottish philosophy under the guidance of Francis Hutcheson and Thomas Reid. While variations occurred, the heart of Common Sense reasoning involved “self-evident truths,” reasoning that emphasized what should be intuitive. That is, evangelicals highlighted their arguments with assumptions from universal, instinctual truths. Both republican values and Common Sense reasoning were initially foreign to Christianity yet became irreversibly fused with it.<sup>12</sup>

The consensus of evangelicalism extended theologically as well as philosophically. Evangelicals focused on gaining new converts and calling them to put their faith in Jesus, the savior of all mankind and the redeemer of the world. While private judgment and individual interpretations gave rise to contests over some of its passages, the Bible remained the common source for all Christian knowledge, wisdom, and morality, and evangelicals interpreted it through the lenses of Common Sense reasoning and republican values. The nature of atonement, imputation of guilt and righteousness, sacraments, the relationship of believers to each other and those outside the Church, Church polity, and Church style were all battlegrounds within

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<sup>11</sup> Noll, 316-318.

<sup>12</sup> Noll, 12, 56, 95.

evangelicalism.<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless, *sola scriptura* provided the undergirding principle for the core shared doctrine as well as the disputed doctrines.<sup>14</sup> In short, evangelicalism was bibliocentric, focused on spiritual regeneration (being “born again”), and opposed to historical ecclesiastical traditions, church authorities, and confessions.<sup>15</sup>

Philip Schaff (1819-1893) represented a notable movement that opposed the dominant consensus of Christianity in nineteenth-century America. He threw down his gauntlet almost immediately after his arrival to the United States in 1844. Between the publication of *The Principle of Protestantism* in 1845 and the first volume of *The History of the Christian Church* in 1858, Schaff provided a conservative, European voice that spoke out loudly against the dominant consensus of evangelical Christianity.<sup>16</sup>

Born in Switzerland and educated in Germany, he spent most of his life in the United States teaching and writing. He came to America to be a professor at Mercersburg

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<sup>13</sup> Dennis Lacorne, *Religion in America: A Political History*, trans. George Holoch (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 43-44; Noll, 161, 174; Perry Miller, *The Life of the Mind in America: From the Revolution to the Civil War* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, Inc, 1965), 7. Noll provides excellent insight into the transformation of theological thought in the uniquely American amalgamation of republican ideals and Christianity that occurred in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. Noll contends that this new American theology had been essential for Americans to “justify independence and build a new nation” (Noll, 161).

<sup>14</sup> Johnson, 20.

<sup>15</sup> Noll, 170.

<sup>16</sup> Sydney E. Ahlstrom, Review of *Romanticism in American Theology: Nevin and Schaff at Mercersburg*, by James Hastings Nichols, *Church History* 30, no. 4 (December 1961): 497; E. Brooks Holifield, *Theology in America: Christian Thought from the Age of the Puritans to the Civil War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 467-468; David W. Lotz, “Philip Schaff and the Idea of Church History,” in *A Century of Church History: The Legacy of Philip Schaff*, edited by Henry W. Bowden (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1988), 30; Philip Schaff, *The Principle of Protestantism as Related to the Present State of the Church*, trans. John W. Nevin (Chambersburg, PA: Publication Office of the German Reformed Church, 1845); Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, 3rd ed., vol. 1 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1910).

Theological Seminary in Pennsylvania, and although he eventually ventured elsewhere, this thesis will deal only with his time at Mercersburg, 1844 to 1863.

Schaff was a well-known historian among his contemporaries and is still a familiar name for church historians.<sup>17</sup> No other historian came close to producing as much as Schaff did over the course of his lifetime.<sup>18</sup> In total, Schaff wrote fifty-five books and edited twenty-seven other books.<sup>19</sup> While his multivolume *History of the Christian Church* commands little attention as a legitimate secondary source for early Christian history by modern critical methods, his multivolume series, *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, remains an authoritative, well-organized resource for historians of the early church.<sup>20</sup> In antebellum America, Schaff's work on the history of the church drew significantly more weight than it did in the closing years of his life. Schaff's approach towards history became outdated by the 1880s because he continued to champion the exaltation of Christ and the Gospel and refused to abandon the idea that God's providential hand guided history.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Although Schaff cannot be considered a celebrity during his life, his name was important enough for the *German Reformed Messenger* to reprint private letters that Schaff wrote back to the United States while abroad in Europe. See for example: Philip Schaff, "Letters from Rev. Dr. Schaff: Ten Days in Scotland," *German Reformed Messenger*, August 16, 1854, 4143; and, Philip Schaff, "Letters from Dr. Schaff," *German Reformed Messenger*, November 15, 1854, 4194.

<sup>18</sup> Henry Warner Bowden, "Science and the Idea of Church History, an American Debate," *Church History* 36, no. 3 (September 1967): 314.

<sup>19</sup> Gary K. Pranger, *Philip Schaff (1819-1893): Portrait of an Immigrant Theologian* (New York: Peter Lang, 1997), 11; Pranger also adds, "The name Philip was born with was 'Schaf' which means sheep, or figuratively, simpleton." Schaff was certainly far from being a simpleton!

<sup>20</sup> All combined, there are 14 volumes, most of which can easily be found online free of charge.

<sup>21</sup> Clark, 158-159; Lotz, 29-30.

Historians have typically treated Schaff within an academic context and have ignored the broader, public response to his writings. Schaff's seminal work, *The Principle of Protestantism*, contained fresh ideas for American theology in 1845 and still provides the best understanding of Schaff's historical intentions. As the work was originally an address to the Mercersburg Theological Seminary, it should be clear that he intended it for an academic audience. For historians studying the mind of Schaff, *The Principle of Protestantism* continues to be fertile ground. Schaff's works have received much attention from scholars like James Hastings Nichols, Klaus Penzel, and Stephen R. Graham.<sup>22</sup> Nichols does particularly well at elaborating on Schaff's German influences, influences which Schaff's critics despised.<sup>23</sup> These historians provide excellent treatments and analyses of Schaff's works by delving into how Schaff constructed them and the major themes therein. One unique perspective on Schaff's works comes from Elizabeth Clark's *Founding the Fathers*, in which she explains how several professors, including Schaff, viewed the early Church fathers and early Church history.<sup>24</sup>

*The Principle of Protestantism* gets the majority of the attention from historians because it set the foundation for the theory of organic development within church history. Schaff theorized that doctrines were not static throughout history. Rather, developments arose organically within the church, allowing the church to grow and adapt, and these

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<sup>22</sup> James Hastings Nichols, *Romanticism in American Theology: Nevin and Schaff at Mercersburg* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961); Klaus Penzel, "Church History in Context: The Case of Philip Schaff," in *Our Common History as Christians: Essays in Honor of Albert C. Outler*, ed. John Deschner, Leroy Howe and Klaus Penzel (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), 217-260; Stephen R. Graham, *Cosmos in the Chaos: Philip Schaff's Interpretation of Nineteenth-Century American Religion* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995).

<sup>23</sup> Ahlstrom, Review of *Romanticism in American Theology*, 497.

<sup>24</sup> Much of the book, however, deals with post-bellum history.

developments were guided by God's hand towards a specific end. David Lotz's essay, "Philip Schaff and the Idea of Church History," provides a comprehensive evaluation of how Schaff constructed his philosophy of history and the purpose of the theory of development.<sup>25</sup> Penzel likewise treats the subject thoroughly.<sup>26</sup>

Whether coming within the pages of broad histories of American Christianity, such as Mark Noll's *America's God*, E. Brooks Hollifield's *Theology in America*, or Claude Welch's *Protestant Thought in the Nineteenth Century*, or within more narrow histories as those from Nichols or Penzel, Schaff's side of the argument receives adequate treatment, but the responses from Schaff's contemporaries have little coverage.<sup>27</sup> Historians like Nichols and Penzel have provided thorough investigations of Schaff's well-known academic critics such as Hodge. Analysis of Schaff's critics, however, largely stops with the major figures of the era. Because Schaff was never the spokesman for the majority of the German Reformed Church's members and also because he rebelled against the consensus of American theology in favor of a traditional, confessional, European-based theology, Schaff and the Mercersburg theology struggled against marginalization.<sup>28</sup> Despite the marginalization, Schaff's critical readership extends beyond the familiar theologians of the era like Hodge.

Because historians give more attention to the treatment of *The Principle of Protestantism*, the rich history of the replies to Schaff's later works has gone relatively

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<sup>25</sup> David W. Lotz, "Philip Schaff and the Idea of Church History," in *A Century of Church History: The Legacy of Philip Schaff*, edited by Henry W. Bowden (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1988).

<sup>26</sup> Penzel, "Church History in Context."

<sup>27</sup> Claude Welch, *Protestant Thought in the Nineteenth Century*, Vol. 1 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972).

<sup>28</sup> Noll, 3, 409, 411.

unnoticed. Comparatively few reviews of *The Principle of Protestantism* and *What is Church History?* appeared in the mid-1840s. Indeed, the majority of the articles concerning Schaff appeared in 1854 and 1859 after the respective releases of the *History of the Apostolic Church* and *History of the Christian Church*, two histories targeting both academic and non-academic readers.<sup>29</sup> Gary K. Pranger alludes to some of the criticism of Schaff that emerged in 1853 but fails to capitalize on the wealth of sources. He only briefly mentions the later criticisms.<sup>30</sup> Graham describes the criticism as climaxing in the mid-1850s, yet he makes only passing references to a couple of Schaff's scholarly opponents.<sup>31</sup>

Along side the academic press, the popular religious press of the mid-1800s vocally and vibrantly discussed tough theological matters. Christianity became infused with American culture and was widely debated.<sup>32</sup> Extended arguments over incidental remarks, such as those concerning Peter's legacy within the papacy, represented symptoms of a much more deadly infection. His histories embodied dangerous antigens within the American body of Christ. Whereas studies have targeted the response from the academics and elites hitherto, this thesis will seek to show how Schaff's histories created immense controversies among all classes and creeds, not just within a narrow academic band. In examining the wealth of relatively untouched sources, it becomes clear that

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<sup>29</sup> Philip Schaff, *History of the Apostolic Church with a General Introduction to Church History*, trans. Edward D. Yeomans (New York: Charles Scribner, 1854).

<sup>30</sup> Gary K. Pranger, *Philip Schaff (1819-1893): Portrait of an Immigrant Theologian* (New York: Peter Lang, 1997), 114.

<sup>31</sup> Graham, 62-63.

<sup>32</sup> Noll, 4.

Schaff engaged in a large public discourse concerning his histories and the nature of Christianity.<sup>33</sup>

Reviews of his works clearly show much anger towards Schaff's history and theology as well as deep concerns for the concomitant implications. From the pages of popular religious newspapers like the *Independent* and from a myriad of academic journals, conservatives like Hodge, revivalist Baptists and Methodists, and even liberal Unitarians criticized Schaff. Considering the diversity of his critics, Schaff's feat of offending almost everyone in some manner is impressive. Even within his own denomination, Schaff found little favor, as evidenced by two heresy trials.<sup>34</sup> Two principle criticisms emerge from the many reviews that appeared during the late 1840s and 1850s that concerned Schaff's histories.

One criticism involved his opponents calling him a pantheist, which emanated from fears of Schaff's German influences and theology. As will be seen later, Schaff rejected heretical German doctrines, but he retained Hegelian arguments within his works. Schaff's very un-American Christianity confused many critics who viewed their theology through the lens of Common Sense realism.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> The bias in the study of Schaff can be partly attributed to accessibility. Many of the articles critiquing Schaff's history and theology come from anonymously written articles buried in between notices about upcoming christenings and advertisements in newspapers. The rest of the articles are interred within academic journals. Now that newspapers and journals from the era have been digitized, it has become easier than ever to search and access the sources.

<sup>34</sup> George H. Schriver, "The Mercersburg Review," in *Religious Periodicals of the United States: Academic and Scholarly Journals*, ed. Charles H. Lippy (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), 347. While accused of heresy, Schaff was never found guilty.

<sup>35</sup> Barbara M. Cross, Review of *Romanticism in American Theology: Nevin and Schaff at Mercersburg*, by James Hastings Nichols, *The New England Quarterly* 34, no 4 (December 1961): 554.



Schaff's opponents also criticized him for being a papist. Schaff's studies praised the history of the Church as an institution. For him, the Bible was best interpreted through understanding how it had been read throughout all of history. He asserted that private judgment and Common Sense reasoning had no place in the Church. On the contrary, Schaff's theology emphasized the centrality of the Church in matters of justification and sanctification. His theology even necessitated Church involvement in salvation. Furthermore, because the Roman Catholic Church was the dominant institution for most of history, critics condemned Schaff for embracing, defending, and promoting Catholicism. As will be illuminated in the following chapters, these views on Church history alienated conservative and liberal Christians and gave his opponents sufficient reason to label him a papist. Because of Schaff's abjuration of evangelical Christianity in these matters, his critics opened up their seven seals, blew their seven trumpets, and poured out all seven bowls of wrath on him.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus preached that “the diseased tree bears bad fruit.”<sup>36</sup> The image of a tree and its fruit is a useful illustration. Schaff's critics made the fruit—the superficial content and implications of his histories—the subjects of their wrath in terms of the content of the articles. The more dangerous problem came from the diseased tree and its root. As will be explored throughout this study, the root—Schaff's European, High-Church Christianity—did not fit in with the settled consensus of Christianity in America. Critics rarely even alluded to the root of the criticisms, which was the true source of their wrath, but attacked the fruit instead. Nor did they have to attack the root because to the contemporary reader, the unsaid misgivings with Schaff

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<sup>36</sup> Matthew 7.17 English Standard Version.

needed no clarification within their historical context. This thesis will endeavor to show the ways in which Schaff's critics from all backgrounds, denominations, and theological dispositions attacked his histories because of his un-American Christianity. This thesis will also illustrate how his supporters sought to vindicate him.

### *The Danger of Church History*

In antebellum America, little differentiated professional academic Church historians from non-academic historians. Church history was a touchy subject because of the potential conflicts that could arise from its study and because of the rampant anti-Catholicism that plagued Protestant Christianity. Most Protestant Christians in America forbade agreement with or approval of Catholicism.<sup>37</sup> Non-Catholic Americans hated Catholics and showed it by playing games like "Break the Pope's Neck" and by having parades ending with burning effigies of the Pope. Harvard held anti-Catholic lectures yearly from 1750 to 1857.<sup>38</sup>

J. W. Proudfit, one of Schaff's most vocal critics, considered Church history valuable and indeed Biblical. Before history could be entrusted to the public and to popular culture, however, Proudfit argued that it had to undergo the same "winnowing process" as secular history, which was the application of critical reasoning to the subject.

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<sup>37</sup> Elizabeth A. Clark, *Founding the Fathers: Early Church History and Protestant Professors in Nineteenth-Century America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 5, 10, 13.

<sup>38</sup> Stephen R. Graham, *Cosmos in the Chaos: Philip Schaff's Interpretation of Nineteenth-Century American Religion* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 47.

“All history has, it is true,” explained Proudfit, “been subjected to exaggeration and distortion. But nowhere have ambition and cupidity had so direct and powerful an *interest* in falsification as in the history of the Christian church. Here, therefore, fables stand in the most disproportion to facts.”<sup>39</sup> Theology can never be far from history in a history of the Church, which meant that dangerous theologies could come out of history books. Most teachers and professors considered Church history treacherous because students could not, in effect, be trusted to see that the history of Christendom had not always been full of harmony, love, and unified faith.<sup>40</sup>

On one hand, the hesitation with church history seems absurd. The New Testament itself records significant conflict in the early Church. Almost all of the epistles attributed to Paul record some sort of conflict. Much of the conflict was with the Judaizing party, who demanded strict adherence to the law and whom Paul referred to as dogs. Paul, Peter, and James, veritable pillars of the early church, clashed over significant issues of the Law and gentiles in Acts 15 and Galatians 3. John’s epistles likewise confront emerging Gnosticism and exhibit significant conflict in Church life.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> J. W. Proudfit, “ART. I—Dr. Schaff’s Works on Church History,” *The New Brunswick Review* 1, no. 1 (May 1854): 1, 20. Proudfit’s evidence for the value of history came from Deuteronomy. He wrote, “It was enjoined of God upon his ancient church, ‘thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God hath led thee in the wilderness, and to prove thee, and to know what was in thine heart, that he might do thee good at thy latter end’” (Proudfit, 1). The first half of the Old Testament quotation comes from Deuteronomy 8.2 and the latter half Deuteronomy 8.16.

<sup>40</sup> Clark, 10.

<sup>41</sup> Ephesians is the only epistle that does not exhibit any marks about conflict within the church. See Philippians 3.2: “Look out for the dogs, look out for the evildoers, look out for those who mutilate the flesh” (English Standard Version). See also 1 Corinthians 3 for conflict over the leader of Christianity as well as the rest of the book of 1 Corinthians for conflicts about church issues to which Paul was responding. Consider that 3 John is in its entirety a letter written to condemn a false teacher within the church.

On the other hand, however, no professionalization of history existed that separated qualified historians from their amateur counterparts. Primary sources for historical endeavors also were in short supply within the United States, even at the university and seminary level. Such primary sources that did exist were difficult to obtain and often poorly organized.<sup>42</sup> *Patrologia Latina*, a 217-volume collection of texts from Tertullian to Pope Innocent III, was published during this era, yet it lacked much organization and even indices initially.

More importantly, early Church history reveals a Church very different from evangelical Christianity. Schaff's colleague at Mercersburg, John W. Nevin, repeatedly addressed how the early Church had more similarities with contemporary Catholicism than Protestantism.<sup>43</sup> Evangelical Christians pursued the revival of the primitive Church with the understanding that the early Church differed little from their evangelicalism, and, as will be seen, any truth that undermined their vision of the early Church received harsh condemnations.

Both academic and popular religious presses felt the impact of Schaff's histories. His debates with others, and the debates between his advocates and adversaries, dealt with eternal matters on a cosmic scale.<sup>44</sup> Most evangelical Christians considered God's recorded dealings with mankind, from the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah to the

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<sup>42</sup> Clark, 13, 83.

<sup>43</sup> John W. Nevin, "Cyprian: Fourth and Last Article," *Mercersburg Review* 4, no. 6 (1852): 513-563; John W. Nevin, "Early Christianity: Third Article," *Mercersburg Review* 4, no. 1 (January 1852): 1-54; John Williamson Nevin, *The Mystical Presence: A Vindication of the Reformed or Calvinistic Doctrine of the Holy Eucharist* (2012 [1846]).

<sup>44</sup> Philip Schaff, *History of the Apostolic Church with a General Introduction to Church History*, trans. Edward D. Yeomans (New York: Charles Scribner, 1854), 98.

striking down of Ananias and Sapphira, from the blessing of Abraham to Paul's visit to the third heaven, as facts of history and truths of theology, not legends, myths, or fables.<sup>45</sup>

Furthermore, quarterly reviews were not generally open to replies from their own articles.<sup>46</sup> While, thought some, it was unfortunate that quarterly reviews did not allow for replies, the replies to articles found widespread readership elsewhere.<sup>47</sup> Many articles in response to academic articles necessarily spilled into the public limelight because the popular religious press provided the most viable venue for replying to criticisms. Articles within scholarly journals, both domestic and international, also received recapitulations within non-academic newspapers.<sup>48</sup> Scholarly books, like Schaff's books, found their places in everyday discussions. J. J. Janeway, one of Schaff's harshest critics, recorded an

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<sup>45</sup> See Genesis 19 for the well-known story of Sodom and Gomorrah and Genesis 17.1-14 concerning God's promise to bless all nations through Abraham. Ananias and Sapphira were struck down for lying to God about giving away the proceeds of the sale of land to the Church; see Acts 5.1-11. Paul's retelling of his visit to paradise and the thorn in his flesh is recorded in 2 Corinthians 12.1-10.

<sup>46</sup> Protestant, "A Reviewer Reviewed," *New York Observer and Chronicle*, June 15, 1854, 187: "A learned and eminent scholar solicits a place in our columns for the following article. We have no reason to doubt the accuracy of his statements, and if a half of his criticisms are correct, as we presume they all are, he makes a case of the most extraordinary injustice or ignorance in the history of religious literature. *Quarterly Reviews are not open to replies to their own articles*, and we therefore grant the writer the space he asks, and he holds himself responsible for all he has to say. He has done his work thoroughly" (emphasis added).

<sup>47</sup> "Dutch Honesty," *German Reformed Messenger*, June 21, 1854, 4110.

<sup>48</sup> See for example: "Notices of Books &c," *German Reformed Messenger*, January 12, 1853, 3810; "Literary Notices," *German Reformed Messenger*, September 17, 1851, 3334; and, "Foreign Theological Periodicals: Prepared Expressly for the Independent," *The Independent*, December 24, 1857, 3.

instance of a publisher who went door-to-door to sell a popular, scholarly book of Christian History.<sup>49</sup>

Theological arguments had, since the dawn of Christianity, largely been about the same issues, such as questions concerning who Jesus was and what Jesus accomplished in his life, death, and resurrection. Whereas these questions had formerly concerned only the learned and the elites, the arguments in nineteenth-century America extended to everyone.<sup>50</sup> Professors of theology entered into the debates, as did those outside of academia and the clergy. The debates were polemical, deeply theological, and very important to all involved because the debates concerned eternal matters applicable to everyone on earth. For example, a reply to an article from the scholarly *Mercersburg Review* of the Mercersburg Theological Seminary in Pennsylvania on the subject of infant baptism came from a “theological farmer in Ohio” who was a Mennonite. The response to the Mennonite farmer came from an “exegetical amateur in Pennsylvania” whom the *German Reformed Messenger* judged to be “more than his equal.”<sup>51</sup> Methodists printed cheap copies of Wesley’s sermons for twenty-five cents each in order “to reach the masses” and give everyone a chance to read as much as possible.<sup>52</sup> Because of the success of an experiment in England where book-sellers were made “to circulate good

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<sup>49</sup> J. J. Janeway, *Antidote to the Poison of Popery, in the Writings and Conduct of Professors Nevin & Schaff, Professors in the German Reformed Church, in the U. S. of America* (New Brunswick, NJ: Press of J. Terhune, 1856), lxii.

<sup>50</sup> Noll, 4.

<sup>51</sup> “Literary Notices,” *German Reformed Messenger*, September 17, 1851, 3334. The idea of a typical evangelical Christian penning a critical, exegetical, reasoned argument on a national scale now seems laughable. It is a tribute to the intellect of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century individual who cared so much about such issues.

<sup>52</sup> “Cheap Publications—The Right Idea,” *Zion’s Herald and Wesleyan Journal*, March 26, 1845, 50.

books,” the *Zion’s Herald* believed that “the success of this experiment shows the fallacy of the common notion, that literature, in order to be popular, must be light, trashy, and exciting.” On the contrary, the author of the article argued that “instructive and elevating” literature could find widespread readership.<sup>53</sup>

Responses to Schaff’s histories show how deeply the consensus of evangelical Christianity had penetrated American Christianity and society. Because even farmers who were miles away from theological institutions found reasons to argue over theology and history, the importance of Schaff’s histories can be seen throughout all social levels. From academics and non-academics, from liberal Unitarians to conservative Presbyterians, this thesis will highlight the vibrant nature of evangelical Christianity throughout its entire spectrum and reveal how Schaff’s histories caused such strong reactions from the consensus of evangelical Christianity.

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<sup>53</sup> “Book-Hawking in England,” *Zion’s Herald and Wesleyan Journal*, January 7, 1857, 1.

## CHAPTER II

## SCHAFF'S INFLUENCES

*German Influences*

Philip Schaff's education in Germany set him apart from his American peers. Before 1860, American higher education curriculums lacked depth and breadth. American universities were small and understaffed, and university libraries had few books compared to their German counterparts.<sup>1</sup> Schaff, in a lecture delivered in Berlin in 1854, lamented, "A university, in the full German sense of the word, America properly as yet has not."<sup>2</sup> Between 1851 and 1852, Schaff was the only professor at the Mercersburg Theological Seminary.<sup>3</sup> In 1855, the largest seminary in the United States had only five professors; most had only two or three.<sup>4</sup>

Schaff's unique background provided much of the knowledge and impetus to forge his controversial histories. As he lacked originality in his history and theology, according to historian Gary Pranger, Schaff drew on several important influences in his

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<sup>1</sup> Elizabeth A. Clark, *Founding the Fathers: Early Church History and Protestant Professors in Nineteenth-Century America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 7.

<sup>2</sup> Philip Schaff, *America: A Sketch of Its Political, Social, and Religious Character*, ed. Perry Miller (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1961 [1855]), 59.

<sup>3</sup> James Hastings Nichols, *Romanticism in American Theology: Nevin and Schaff at Mercersburg* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), 209.

<sup>4</sup> Clark, 9.



life that affected his writing.<sup>5</sup> The most important of these influences came from Germany when he had been there as a student and afterwards as a contender in the theological arena. In addition to Germany's modern historical reasoning, German Pietism and Prussian High Orthodoxy affected his thoughts and writing.<sup>6</sup>

Because of the depth of Schaff's influences, it is beyond the scope of this work to examine everything in detail.<sup>7</sup> Rather, this study will highlight some of Schaff's most controversial influences in order to illustrate how these influences put Schaff in opposition to evangelical Christianity. While in many cases Schaff vehemently opposed his former teachers and colleagues, his mere association with them upset his American reviewers. Schaff's critics frequently concocted negative remarks about aspects of Schaff's histories that had foundations in his German influences, yet the reviewers blatantly ignored the many critical remarks Schaff himself made about the same people and philosophies. Also, responses from the religious press in America reveal how closely Americans watched German theology and its dangerous tendencies. Evangelical Christians across a broad spectrum of education and denominations distrusted much of what German theology gave to the world. Esoteric issues of theology in Germany found their way to the religious press of America, which shows just how powerful the matters of eternal concern were to the public who read Schaff's histories. Critics took the controversies seriously, and the controversies appeared within the popular religious press.

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<sup>5</sup> Gary K. Pranger, *Philip Schaff (1819-1893): Portrait of an Immigrant Theologian* (New York: Peter Lang, 1997), 92.

<sup>6</sup> John C. Meyer, "Philip Schaff: An Ecumenical Pioneer," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 27, no. 4 (1990): 697.

<sup>7</sup> For more detailed analyses, see: Pranger, 11-51; Nichols, 107-139.

In the introduction to *History of the Christian Church*, Schaff wrote that the “bold” critical approach of German historians, “though often arbitrary and untenable in its results, has nevertheless done good service by removing old prejudices, placing many things in a new light, and conducing to a comprehensive and organic view of the living process and gradual growth of ancient Christianity....” The “modern German historians,” especially F. C. Baur, Augustus Neander, and David Friedrich Strauss, ably explained the organic development of the Church from its humble origins, through Catholicism, and to Protestantism.<sup>8</sup> Schaff lauded the German historians for much of what they did for Church history while at the same time issuing a word of caution that some of the results lacked clarity and truth. Most importantly, the German historians created the theory of development in Church history as a way to show how the Church changed throughout the ages so as to allow for a better perspective on the history of Christianity.

Schaff’s German education provided most of the influence through the two forces of “the negative and pantheistic left,” notably Ferdinand Christian Baur, and the conservative side, championed by Augustus Neander.<sup>9</sup> Baur and Neander had a similar relationship to that of Schleiermacher and Hegel.<sup>10</sup> Schaff posited Neander and Baur as opponents and explained, “The two theories of apostolic history, introduced by Neander and Baur, are antagonistic in principle and aim, and united only by the moral bond of an honest search for truth. The one is conservative and reconstructive, the other radical and

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<sup>8</sup> Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, 3rd ed., vol. 1 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1910), viii.

<sup>9</sup> Philip Schaff, “Our Correspondence: The Divines of Germany,” *New York Evangelist*, June 5, 1856, 28.

<sup>10</sup> Klaus Penzel, “Church History in Context: The Case of Philip Schaff,” in *Our Common History as Christians: Essays in Honor of Albert C. Outler*, ed. John Deschner, Leroy Howe and Klaus Penzel (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), 228.

destructive.”<sup>11</sup> They used similar scientific techniques in their historical investigations but reached radically different conclusions. Whereas Neander’s intent was to edify the Church through the exaltation of its history and Christ, Schaff believed Baur’s histories attacked the Church through unreasonably critical approaches to history. Schaff fused together facets from both Baur and Neander in his writings. He was fortunate for having studied under both.<sup>12</sup> American Christians, however, had reservations about these German influences.

### *Neander and Schleiermacher*

In regards to Neander, Schaff had almost nothing but praise and, in his *History of the Apostolic Church*, noted that he “dedicated it to the memory of my late honored teacher and friend, Dr. AUGUSTUS NEANDER, (by his permission granted to me with the kindest wishes for my success shortly before his lamented death), as a token of my high veneration for the profound and conscientious scholarship, the liberal and catholic spirit, and the deep-toned, humble and childlike piety of this truly great and good man, the ‘father of modern church history.’”<sup>13</sup>

Neander accepted and advocated for the miracles of the first-century church and stood by his motto of “*Pectus est, quod theologum facit.*”<sup>14</sup> His “liberal and catholic spirit”

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<sup>11</sup> Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, 208.

<sup>12</sup> Penzel, “Church History in Context,” 228.

<sup>13</sup> Philip Schaff, *History of the Apostolic Church with a General Introduction to Church History*, trans. Edward D. Yeomans (New York: Charles Scribner, 1854), iii-iv.

<sup>14</sup> Penzel, “Church History in Context,” 231. “*Pectus est, quod theologum facit*” means “The heart is what makes the theologian.”

gave him sympathy for the medieval Catholic Church because for “him, in truth,” explained Schaff, “the universal history of the church is no mere fortuitous concourse of outward facts, but a connected process of evolution, an unbroken continuation of the life of Christ through all centuries.” Rather than disdaining the medieval church, Neander saw how the church changed through the ages and “met the same Christ in them all, only in different forms.” Neander, nevertheless, kept himself from any sort of “Romanizing tendency” and created histories filled with living narratives consisting of “the *vital union of the two elements of science and Christian piety.*”<sup>15</sup> Thus Neander was able to show Schaff how to write a history of the universal church, not just of a particular sect, with scientific, scholarly methods while staying faithful to a risen Christ.

Neander, who dedicated his *General History of the Christian Religion and Church* to Friedrich Schelling, explained in the preface his purpose for writing history: “To exhibit the history of the Church of Christ, as a living witness of the divine power of Christianity; as a school of Christian experience; a voice, sounding through the ages, of instruction, of doctrine, and of reproof, for all who are disposed to listen; this, from the earliest period, has been the leading aim of my life and studies.”<sup>16</sup> For Neander, Church history provided for the Church a repository of wisdom for guidance, much in the same way that the apostle Paul saw the Old Testament as “profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness. . . .”<sup>17</sup> Biased histories from the point of view of an individual sect, however, would not suffice. Neander continued, “Nothing but

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<sup>15</sup> Schaff, *History of the Apostolic Church*, 99-100; italics in original.

<sup>16</sup> August Neander, *General History of the Christian Religion and Church*, 7th edition, trans. Joseph Torrey, Vol. 1 (Boston: Crocker and Brewster, 1851), Preface to the First Edition.

<sup>17</sup> 1 Timothy 3.16 (ESV).

what can stand as truth before the scrutiny of genuine, unprejudiced science,—of a science which does not see through the glass of a particular philosophical or dogmatic school,—can be profitable for instruction, doctrine, and reproof....” In fact, any scientific history would by virtue of its nature provide “instruction, doctrine, and reproof” for the good of the Church.<sup>18</sup> Neander sought to infuse his histories with life from Christ and the power of scientific inquiry in order to promote a living history of truth and facts. The fusion of history and faith had a powerful influence on how Schaff understood Biblical exegesis and the development of the Church during its progression towards the millennial kingdom.

While a true history of the Church requires scientific history and Christian faith, Schaff faulted Neander’s history because “a perfect church history calls for more than this.”<sup>19</sup> Schaff accused Neander of heterodoxy because Neander doubted the genuineness of 1 Timothy, 2 Peter, and Revelation. Neander, lacking sufficient faith, also disregarded the factual history of Christianity and attempted “to resolve the whole mystery into something purely inward and ideal. In this respect, he appears to us quite too little Catholic, in the real and historical sense of the word. True, he is neither a Gnostic, nor a Baptist, nor a Quaker; though many of his expressions sundered from their connection, sound very favorable to these hyper-spiritualistic sects.” In Schaff’s mind, Neander presented heretical forms of Christianity favorably. Neander argued for freedom rather than legalism because love transcends the Law, but Schaff contended that “we must still

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<sup>18</sup> Neander, Preface to the First Edition.

<sup>19</sup> Schaff, *History of the Apostolic Church*, 101; see also: Nichols, 115-116; Penzel also adds that Schaff found fault with Neander for not accepting Hegelian philosophy and orthodox Lutheran confessionalism (Penzel, 237).

never forget the important principle, that true freedom can thrive only in the sphere of authority; the individual, only in due subordination to the general; and that genuine catholicity is as rigid against error, as it is liberal towards the various manifestations of truth.”<sup>20</sup> Schaff undoubtedly insulted the Baptists by placing them alongside the heretical Gnostics. More importantly, Schaff’s view of what constituted orthodox theology and aberrations from his own orthodoxy reveals a theology that is High-Church, Christocentric, and very different from evangelical Christianity.

Neander’s style lacked energy and vitality. “His writing moves along with heavy uniformity and wearisome verbosity,” explained Schaff, “without any picturesque alternation of light and shade, without rhetorical elegance or polish, without comprehensive classification; like a noiseless stream over an unbroken plain.” Schaff concluded his comments on Neander by writing that despite “these faults, Neander, still remains, on the whole, beyond doubt the greatest church historian thus far of the nineteenth century.”<sup>21</sup>

From Neander, Schaff took the idea of writing the history of the universal Church and setting aside anti-Catholic and other similar sentiments. His friendly disposition towards Catholicism within his histories set him apart from his American peers and caused considerable anger. He believed that a history of the Church had to be one filled with the living power of the Gospel rather than sterile facts and figures, but it had to be scientific and forward-thinking in the philosophy of history at the same time. Neander

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<sup>20</sup> Schaff, *History of the Apostolic Church*, 101-103.

<sup>21</sup> Schaff, *History of the Apostolic Church*, 105-106. Schaff also believed that Neander failed to see how the Church radically altered art and the concept of art throughout the ages.

nevertheless remained a conservative figure because his theology upheld the divinity of Christ and advocated for the Gospel as truth. Lastly, Schaff found Neander's style of writing to be dreadfully boring and consciously wrote with the intention of being readable and stylistically enjoyable, which would allow his works to be widely read.<sup>22</sup>

Friedrich Schleiermacher had been influential to Neander, Schaff, and a host of other theologians.<sup>23</sup> The clear influence of Schleiermacher on Schaff concerned reviewers of his work. Schleiermacher could not be condemned as a pantheist directly, but he could still be classified with Schelling and Hegel, who were both labeled pantheists.<sup>24</sup> A reviewer of *Geschichte der Christlichen Kirche*, Schaff's German edition of *History of the Apostolic Church*, remarked that Schaff's "adoption of Schleiermacher's maxim, that Christianity is not a doctrine (*lehre*) but a life (*leben*), tends in its logical development to favour the rationalistic representation of the most material doctrinal diversities as mere exterior variations in the action of the same essential principle, so that one apostle could believe and teach that men are justified by works, and another that justification is by faith alone." The reviewer admitted that Schaff did not believe that all variations of Christian doctrine had the same foundation. The criticism remained that by viewing Christianity as a way of life and ignoring right beliefs, heresy would creep into the Church because a

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<sup>22</sup> Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, 22; see chapter three for more on this subject.

<sup>23</sup> David W. Lotz, "Philip Schaff and the Idea of Church History," in *A Century of Church History: The Legacy of Philip Schaff*, ed. Henry W. Bowden (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1988), 7; George W. Richards, "The Mercersburg Theology: Its Purposes and Principles," *Church History* 20, no. 3 (September 1951): 49. Penzel provides a detailed discussion of Schelling's and Schleiermacher's influences on ecumenical concerns. See: Klaus Penzel, "A Chapter in the History of the Ecumenical Quest: Schelling and Schleiermacher," *Church History* 33, no 3 (September 1964): 322-337.

<sup>24</sup> *The Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review* 26, no. 1 (January 1854): 168.

moral life would hide poor theology. The reviewer was concerned that although he could “adopt with very little modification” Schaff’s theology, Schaff presents his doctrines without sufficient scriptural proof, and “some who are enamoured of the looser German systems of belief, might possibly be tempted to embrace them in the hope of thus giving them an orthodox interpretation.”<sup>25</sup>

While Schaff would oppose such an argument on the grounds that his proof comes from scripture and its historical interpretation rather than scripture as interpreted through the lens of Common Sense, Schleiermacher’s philosophy posed concerns because it allowed for heterodoxy to creep into the Church under the guise of “modern” Christianity.<sup>26</sup> Schleiermacher’s idea of Christianity being a life rather than a set of rules and beliefs permeated Schaff’s work.<sup>27</sup> It allowed Schaff to see unity in the New Testament and later writings while still being able to acknowledge the difficulties and differences within those writings.

### *Baur and the Tübingen School*

Schaff’s education at Tübingen provided significant influences as well. Baur and the Tübingen School represented a branch of Christian scholarship that Schaff considered erudite and hazardous. The Tübingen School evolved from “the old deistic Rationalism of Common Sense...[and] gave way to a more refined, and dangerous Pantheism, arrayed

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<sup>25</sup> *The Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review* 24, no. 4 (October 1851): 654-655.

<sup>26</sup> *The Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review* 20, no. 4 (1848): 630.

<sup>27</sup> Neander also used “Schleiermacher’s view of the nature of Christianity as ‘life’” (Penzel, “Church History in Context,” 230).



in the armory of Hegelian Philosophy.”<sup>28</sup> Schaff elsewhere elaborated that “out of Hegelian philosophy there has proceeded a more ingenious, spirited and subtle form of Rationalism which uses Christian forms of speech for Pantheistic ideas, and labored to undermine, by an extravagant criticism, the historical foundations of the Bible and of early Christianity.”<sup>29</sup> The Tübingen School stood “in direct opposition to the Neandrian style of church history.”<sup>30</sup> If Neander intended his histories to glorify Christ and provide wisdom and guidance for the Church, Schaff considered the Tübingen School’s purpose to destroy the Christian faith through pantheistic rationalization. Rather than accept the supernatural, the Tübingen School advocated for natural causes in history. While few accepted every conclusion made by Baur and the Tübingen School, Baur’s influence has continued to resonate within the field of Church history and theology.<sup>31</sup>

Schaff and American evangelical Christians considered many of the individual conclusions made by the Tübingen School’s writers to be heretical—or at least very near to heretical—because the conclusions, according to Schaff, “differ materially from the faith of the Reformation, and reject the fundamental articles of Christianity....”<sup>32</sup> David Friedrich Strauss of the Tübingen School, whom Schaff considered furthest away from orthodox Christianity, called the Gospel a myth and “recommended the worship of

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<sup>28</sup> Philip Schaff, “Our Correspondence: Religious State of Germany,” *New York Evangelist*, March 6, 1856, 1.

<sup>29</sup> Philip Schaff, “Our Correspondence: Theological Schools in Germany,” *New York Evangelist*, November 20, 1856, 218.

<sup>30</sup> Schaff, *History of the Apostolic Church*, 108.

<sup>31</sup> Herman Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology*, 1997 Paperback Edition, trans. John Richard De Witt (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1975), 17; A. C. Headlam, “Methods of Early Church History,” *The English Historical Review* 14, no. 53 (January 1899), 14.

<sup>32</sup> Schaff, “Our Correspondence: The Divines of Germany,” 28.

human genius, as the only real divinity!” Schaff continued,

His more cautious friends, Baur, Zeller, Schwegler, (the so called Tubingen school,) applied this destructive work of criticism to the whole apostolic and post-apostolic literature, and arrived at the conclusion, that all the books of the New Testament, with the exception of five, were fabrications of the second century, and that the Christianity of the Church, far from being the product of Christ himself, resulted as a compromise of the protracted conflict of the early heresies, in which Gnosticism plays the most prominent part. The ‘Hallesche Tahrbücher’ taught this Pantheistic philosophy and destructive theology without any reserve, denying the existence of a personal God, of the personal immortality of the soul, and deifying poor sinful man. Feuerbach employed all his ingenuity to prove that theology was only a reflection of anthropology, and all religion a dream of the human fancy.<sup>33</sup>

These criticisms could hardly be ignored because the Gospel decries the glorification of man and the denial of God’s sovereignty and power. Schaff summarized that “the fundamental defect of this destructive method is the *entire want of faith*, without which it is as impossible duly to understand Christianity, its inspired records, and its inward history, as to perceive light and color without eyes.”<sup>34</sup> The Tübingen School offered an agnostic Christianity full of historical reasoning but lacking any real saving power. God stands distant, and man suffers without a soul yet nevertheless becomes a god. Furthermore, allowing only a few books of the New Testament to be considered genuine stood much in contrast to the evangelical position which considered, in the words of the apostle Paul, that “all Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for

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<sup>33</sup> Schaff, “Our Correspondence: Religious State of Germany,” 1. Baur’s accepting five books of the New Testament is likely a misprint. Baur accepted only Romans, Galatians and the two letters to the Corinthians as genuine Pauline epistles (Ridderbos, 17; Schaff had the correct number in *History of the Apostolic Church*, 113).

<sup>34</sup> Schaff, *History of the Apostolic Church*, 113.

reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.”<sup>35</sup>

Baur sought freedom from the traditional doctrines of the church, which he thought cramped historical exploration, and ably used Hegel’s philosophy in his arguments to prove his points. He was also one of the first to strip from the Bible its holy status by placing it within its historical context as merely another useful source rather than the source of eternal life. Unlike Neander, Baur denied supernatural events within history.<sup>36</sup> *The Independent*, a popular newspaper with a Congregationalist heritage, commented on literature and affairs of both domestic and international origins and concerns.<sup>37</sup> “According to this school,” explained *The Independent* that was summarizing recent scholarly theological publications for the public, “Christianity is in no sense miraculous or supernatural, but the logical and natural development of the beliefs that went before it.”<sup>38</sup> Schaff explained their maxim as “everything reasonable is actual, and everything actual, (all that *truly* exists), is reasonable.”<sup>39</sup>

For Baur, since the supernatural cannot be verified historically, it cannot have happened—or at least cannot be considered history.<sup>40</sup> Baur, for example, believed, “What the Resurrection is in itself lies outside the sphere of historical investigation.” Rather than reasoning about Christ’s resurrection as a fact, he contended that “the historical

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<sup>35</sup> 2 Timothy 3.16-17 ESV.

<sup>36</sup> Penzel, “Church History in Context,” 229-230.

<sup>37</sup> Charles H. Lippy, ed., *Religious Periodicals of the United States: Academic and Scholarly Journals* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), xiii, xv.

<sup>38</sup> “The Periodicals,” *The Independent*, October 22, 1857, 3.

<sup>39</sup> Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, 108.

<sup>40</sup> Penzel, “Church History in Context,” 229-230.

consideration has only to hold to the fact that for the faith of the disciples the resurrection of Jesus became the strongest and most incontestable certainty. Christianity acquired only in this faith the firm foundation of its historical development. For history, the necessary presupposition of everything that follows is not the factuality of the resurrection of Jesus itself, but the belief in the same.”<sup>41</sup> Denying the source of the Christian faith necessarily put Baur at odds with Schaff. Baur admitted 1 Corinthians as one of only four epistles actually penned by Paul, but Baur treated Paul’s declaration that “if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain” as a matter of belief at a point in time of history rather than reality.<sup>42</sup> For Baur, agency in history came not from the hand of God, as Schaff had it, but “of a rational world-spirit, which makes use of individual men for the accomplishment of its plans.”<sup>43</sup>

In addition denying the miraculous nature of Christianity, Baur also, as hinted above, saw Christianity as a religion that developed logically within history rather than one divinely instituted: “His favorite principle is, the doctrines of the church have been necessarily developed in such a way that all the details and historical incidents, in a history worthy of the name, ought to be logically attached to one another as links in the same chain. We see here the Hegelian principle of an immanent dialectal process.”<sup>44</sup> How Baur categorized and saw development in church history primarily centered on showing the conflict between Jewish and Gentile factions in the early Church. The conflict

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<sup>41</sup> F. C. Baur, *Das Christentum und die christliche Kirche der drei ersten Jahrhunderte* (Tübingen: L. F. Fues, 1853), 39, quoted in Penzel, “Church History in Context,” 230.

<sup>42</sup> “The Periodicals,” *The Independent*, October 22, 1857, 3; Ridderbos, 17; 1 Corinthians 15.14 ESV.

<sup>43</sup> Schaff, *History of the Apostolic Church*, 108.

<sup>44</sup> “The Periodicals,” *The Independent*, October 22, 1857, 3.

continued until reconciliation in the third century Catholic Church, which crushed many evangelical Christians' baseless notions of harmony, love, and unity in the early church.<sup>45</sup> In the same way that David Frederick Strauss employed critical rationalism on the life of Jesus in *Leben Jesu* in 1835, which stripped Jesus of all divinity, Baur and others used similar critical reasoning on the book of Acts and the early church. The later heretical Ebionism was declared as normative Christianity for first-century believers.<sup>46</sup> Baur reduced the evangelical fortress of the book of Romans down to a letter designed to mediate conflict between Jews and Gentiles.<sup>47</sup> He also deduced that the Gospel of John, which is the source of so much essential Christian doctrine as well, was written as a book to reconcile the conflict, as recorded in Romans, between Pauline/Gnostic and Petrine/Ebionite Christians during the mid-second century.<sup>48</sup>

Baur's offensive conclusion in regards to the Gospel of John caused Schaff to exclaim that "thus the most profound and spiritual of all productions comes from an obscure nobody; the most sublime and ideal portrait of the immaculate Redeemer, from an imposter!! And it is not a real history, but a sort of philosophico-religious [*sic*] romance, the offspring of the speculative fancy of the Christians after the time of the apostles!! Here this panlogistic [*sic*] school, with its critical acumen and a priori construction, reaches the point, where, in its mockery of all outward historical testimony,

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<sup>45</sup> Clark, 106, 111.

<sup>46</sup> Schaff, *History of the Apostolic Church*, 111. See also: David Friedrich Strauss, *Das Leben Jesu für das Deutsche Volk Bearbeitet*, 4<sup>th</sup> Ed. (Leipzig: F. A. Brodhaus, 1874); English translation: David Friedrich Strauss, *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined*, trans. George Eliot, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. (London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co., 1892). Both versions are available free from Google Books.

<sup>47</sup> "Literary Record: Recent Foreign Theological Periodicals," *The Independent*, May 7, 1857, 3.

<sup>48</sup> Schaff, *History of the Apostolic Church*, 112.

its palpable extravagance, and violation of Common Sense, it confutes itself.”<sup>49</sup> *The Independent* also found Baur’s reasoning in general to be flawed: “In spite of the immense superiority of Baur, as a critic and historian, over the other Hegelians, he is not beyond the reach of the charge of having too often sacrificed [*sic*] reality to logic, and of thrusting history forcibly into categories which stifle that which they seem to embrace.”<sup>50</sup> Christians who believed in a historical faith and a living savior found Baur’s conclusions reprehensible.

Because of Baur’s late dating of New Testament writings, denial of the divine, and incomplete doctrine, American evangelical scholars considered Baur a dangerous opponent.<sup>51</sup> Schaff as well reminded his readers not “to withhold a decided and uncompromising protest against the dangerous and antichristian extravagances of the skeptical school of Baur. All personal consideration must be subordinated to the sacred interests of faith and the church.”<sup>52</sup> Authors and reviews that sided with Baur received negative reviews. For example, in a summary of an issue of the liberal *Westminster Review* where “the writer pleads earnestly in favor of the reckless conclusion of the Tubingen school, with Baur at its head, in respect to the early history of Christianity [and the late dating of John],” the *New York Evangelist* concluded that the quarterly review had denied the saving faith of Jesus. The paper also added, “The general tone of that Review, under its present auspices, is at war with the historical grounds of the Christian

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<sup>49</sup> Schaff, *History of the Apostolic Church*, 112.

<sup>50</sup> “The Periodicals,” *The Independent*, October 22, 1857, 3. For more information on *The Independent*, see: Thomas E. Frank, “The Outlook,” in *Religious Periodicals of the United States: Academic and Scholarly Journals*, ed. Charles H. Lippy (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), 409.

<sup>51</sup> Clark, 106, 111.

<sup>52</sup> Schaff, *History of the Apostolic Church*, 95.

faith, and in sympathy with the most destructive results of German criticism and philosophy.”<sup>53</sup> Baur’s conclusions attacked many of the central tenets of Christianity, and those who followed his conclusions received grave condemnations.<sup>54</sup>

Scholars and theologians were not the only ones concerned with Baur. He stood as a force with which to be reckoned in public circles. *The Independent* considered him “notorious” and “the ablest of the modern school of Anti-Supernaturalists.”<sup>55</sup> Baur, “whose great acuteness and ability none will deny, whatever may be thought of his speculations,” was so well known that there was no need for introductions in non-academic periodicals.<sup>56</sup> The popular religious press reiterated that Baur’s radically different views of the primitive Church formed the source of the controversy. Since many of the evangelical churches were striving to return to the church of early Christianity, Baur’s powerful views caused concerns even for non-academic readers. Even esoteric issues found space in the popular religious press. One article within *The Independent* summarized an 1856 issue of *Studien und Kritiken* on why Western and Eastern branches of the church celebrate Easter at different times. Baur, despite viewing the Gospel of John as written late in the second century and “not the work of the beloved disciple” is still

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<sup>53</sup> “Foreign Theological Intelligence,” *New York Evangelist*, June 9, 1853, 90. Neander is also listed in the article as rejecting the views of Baur and the *Westminster Review*. For a brief history of the British *Westminster Review* and its editorial direction towards political, moral, and literary reviews targeted at the middle class, see: Louis Fraiber, “The *Westminster Review* and American Literature, 1824-1885,” *American Literature* 24, no. 3 (November 1952): 310-312.

<sup>54</sup> Hegel, Fichte, and Schelling likewise received harsh criticisms, especially from Princeton’s Charles Hodge, J. W. Alexander, and Albert B. Dod (Philip Gura, *American Transcendentalism: A History* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2007), 115).

<sup>55</sup> “Literary Record: Recent Foreign Theological Periodicals,” *The Independent*, May 7, 1857, 3.

<sup>56</sup> E. A., “Our Correspondence: The Doxology in Romans IX. 5,” *The Independent*, October 14, 1858, 2.

referred to as “celebrated” in the article.<sup>57</sup> He was easily described as brilliant despite the clear distaste for some of his views.<sup>58</sup> Schaff referred to him as “a man of imposing learning, bold criticism, surprising power of combination, and a restless productiveness....”<sup>59</sup> His work also garnered enough interest to warrant serial publications, which meant that “the conclusion of the article is reserved for the next number.”<sup>60</sup> Baur’s writings demanded the attention of both academic and non-academic readers because, as with Schaff’s writings, matters of eternity took center stage.

Despite how Baur’s arguments targeted the heart of Christianity, not all that he produced received strictures from Schaff. Schaff took from Baur the idea of historical development within the Church, as seen within *The Principle of Protestantism* and his later works. Thus it is not difficult to understand why some of Schaff’s critics had reservations with Schaff’s theory of development because the origins of the theory come from a school of thought very much opposed to evangelical Christianity.

Whereas the origins of the theory of development concerned Schaff’s critics, as will be seen in chapter four, Schaff did not fear Baur’s negative influence on Christianity for two reasons. First, Baur’s criticism strengthened those who were faithful. In an article on Christianity in Germany, Schaff wrote that “after all the productions of these writers,

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<sup>57</sup> “Recent Foreign Theological Literature,” *The Independent*, February 5, 1857, 2. *The Independent* considered *Studien und Kritiken* to be “one of the oldest and best of the theological journals of Germany, and has been sustained, ever since its foundation, in the spirit of free discussion for a supernatural revelation and an active Christianity” (italics in original).

<sup>58</sup> See: “The Periodicals,” *The Independent*, October 15, 1857, 3; “Recent Foreign Theological Literature,” *The Independent*, February 5, 1857, 2; “Literary Record: Recent Foreign Theological Periodicals,” *The Independent*, May 7, 1857, 3.

<sup>59</sup> Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, 109.

<sup>60</sup> “Literary Record: Recent Foreign Theological Periodicals,” *The Independent*, May 7, 1857, 3; see also “The Periodicals,” *The Independent*, October 15, 1857, 3.



especially the Tübingen critics, to whom must be accorded the credit of a rare amount of learning, power of combination, and a certain moral earnestness, have done perhaps more good than harm, by bringing matters to a crisis, by drawing a sharper line of distinction between opposite parties, and by eliciting an extensive amount of apologetic literature relating to the history of primitive Christianity, and the fundamental articles of faith.”<sup>61</sup>

Schaff reiterated the consensus that the Tübingen critics were brilliant, but more importantly Schaff saw the critics as a purifying fire, one that would in the end only strengthen the Christians. The Tübingen School’s powerful arguments demanded even stronger responses, and Schaff saw faithful Christians taking up the call to respond.

Nevertheless, one summary of an issue of *Tübingen Jahrbücher* in *The Independent* revealed that because of the adroit arguments from the Tübingen critics, their work was not for the weak of faith:

The conclusions at which they arrive are so monstrous and improbable that they offend the sober intellect and shock the better feelings of any right-minded Christian scholar. But the structure of their argument is such as to carry the interpreter right into the very heart of the argument of each writer, and to force him to follow the logical import and connection of his thoughts. Their criticism is manly and thorough-going in its spirit, and it teaches the student to do entire justice to the intellect of a writer. It does not allow the attention to stop at the mere surface of expressions, or to fritter itself away by vague inductions from the *usus loquendi*, but it deals in a manly temper with writers whom it respects enough to treat as men who know what they write about, and who write with clear thoughts and strong feelings.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Philip Schaff, “Our Correspondence: Religious State of Germany,” *New York Evangelist*, March 6, 1856, 1.

<sup>62</sup> “Foreign Theological Periodicals: Prepared Expressly for the Independent,” *The Independent*, December 24, 1857, 3. It is fascinating to consider that *The Independent* published summaries of foreign theological journals such as these and a testament to American readers at the time that they were willing and interested to engage in such debates.

However heretical the conclusions, the “manly” criticisms drew all readers deep into the controversies and obligated them to reconcile their scholarship and faith with the Tübingen School’s arguments. Only well-studied students would be able to stand against such “destructive criticism and thus find themselves with “a firmer faith.” *The Independent* recommended that any students who were not “sufficiently mature” should avoid Baur.<sup>63</sup>

Second, Schaff, along with a few others by the mid-1850s, viewed the Tübingen School as past its prime and in decline. In an article on German universities, Schaff, in regards to the Tübingen critics, concluded, “the extraordinary agitation which they produced in theological circles some years ago, has almost completely died away and made room for more practical questions which now engross the attention of Germany, even to the serious injury of the interests of philosophy.”<sup>64</sup> Six months later, another author made similar remarks: “But if Germany has furnished the poison [especially from Strauss, Baur, and Feuerbach], she has furnished the antidote also. Her own learning has foiled the arts and exposed the shallowness of her skepticism. The age of Neology and rationalism has gone by, and however its dregs may have settled down to the lower strata of the German mind, leaving still their poison there, her ablest intellects, by an immense preponderance, are now ranging themselves on the side of an Evangelical Christianity.”<sup>65</sup> These authors championed the survival of the Gospel in Germany and proclaimed the

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<sup>63</sup> “Foreign Theological Periodicals,” 3.

<sup>64</sup> Schaff, “Our Correspondence: Theological Schools in Germany,” 218.

<sup>65</sup> “German Scholars and Divines,” *New York Evangelist*, April 23, 1857, 1. The author believed that “the old rationalism is dead” and that “for the most part, the German Universities are the strongholds of an evangelical faith. They have recovered from the grasp of a cold skepticism, and are doing valiant service in the cause of Christ. We hail this as the omen of a brighter day.”

demise of liberal criticism. They believed that the Gospel had survived because of a return to Christ and the cross, just as the Gospel had persevered through the previous 1,800 years.<sup>66</sup>

Whereas the criticisms Baur levied against Christianity did promote a healthy response and defense of the faith, Schaff failed to grasp the lasting power and influence of the Tübingen School in asserting the decline of its theological criticism. Perhaps Schaff did in fact believe that the critical theology from scholars like Baur was declining, and on the public level it may have been in decline at the time. Over the course of history, it was not the case. In 1863, for example, *The Methodist Quarterly Review* still despised German rationalism because scholars like Baur rejected any divine influence on history.<sup>67</sup>

The importance of the influence of Neander and Baur on Schaff cannot be understated. Both men possessed profound intellects and offered histories of the Christian Church that Americans could not ignore. Baur was a figure with dangerous convictions, so Schaff's influence from him was seen as potentially dangerous as well. The education Schaff received from Baur and Neander as well as their continuing influence can be seen throughout all of Schaff's work on Church history. Clearly Schaff rejected Baur's heretical doctrines, but as will be seen, he retained the theory of development within his works. Schaff's evangelical critics considered the Hegelian structure of the theory of

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<sup>66</sup> See also: "German Protestantism," *New York Evangelist*, March 30, 1854, 50.

<sup>67</sup> "ART. I—Natural Theology," *The Methodist Quarterly Review* 15 (April 1863): 3: "The only form of infidelity from which Christianity has anything to fear is the *Theory of Development*. A theory of moral development has been formed by the rationalists of Germany to explain the sublime system of moral truth contained in the Bible, without recurring to divine inspiration. According to the theory the monotheism of the Jewish religion was a simple development of polytheism, and Christianity sprang up spontaneously out of Judaism" (italics in original).

development to be at the root of his problematic histories, which resulted in multiple condemnations of him being a pantheist. His German influences underscored how Schaff's Christianity stood in opposition to the consensus of American evangelicalism.

### *Schaff and Nevin*

Modern German theology also influenced John W. Nevin, Schaff's colleague at Mercersburg.<sup>68</sup> Schaff found Nevin intimidating at first until he learned of their mutual interests in German theology. Schaff and Nevin worked together closely, and Nevin both influenced Schaff personally and affected views about Schaff by their association.<sup>69</sup> Criticisms against Nevin regularly came side by side those against Schaff, and often the criticisms were either interchangeable between Schaff and Nevin or applicable to both even if only one were named.

Nevin presented his conception of organic development in the preliminary essay to *The Mystical Presence* shortly after Schaff did with *The Principle of Protestantism*. While the views of organic development were similar, Nevin and Schaff disagreed on some points.<sup>70</sup> Nevin presented Christianity as a new life in Christ, and this new life becomes part of the Church that is "Christianity as an organic whole" rather than extending beyond the simple rank and file borders of Catholicism, Protestantism, or other

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<sup>68</sup> E. Brooks Holifield, *Theology in America: Christian Thought from the Age of the Puritans to the Civil War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 470.

<sup>69</sup> Gary K. Pranger, *Philip Schaff (1819-1893): Portrait of an Immigrant Theologian* (New York: Peter Lang, 1997), 92.

<sup>70</sup> John B. Payne, "Schaff and Nevin, Colleagues at Mercersburg: The Church Question," *Church History* 61, no. 2 (June 1992): 169.

sects.<sup>71</sup> Nevin criticized the sectarianism that pervaded America. Schaff, on the other hand, saw the hand of God within the sectarianism and perceived that the Church would overcome such divisions in the end.<sup>72</sup>

Nevin saw the Church history develop through four stages: doctrine, law, redemption, and unity. The Church could at first concern itself only with understanding what it believed. By the time the barbarians had conquered Rome, the Church found its new purpose in dispensing the law and moral authority to the uncivilized barbarians. After nearly a thousand years of law, the Reformation advanced Christianity into what Nevin called the age of redemption. Redemption, while superior to law and doctrine, only partly revealed Christianity's true purpose. The last age, in which Nevin believed he lived, progressed to the highest stage of Christianity. The theanthropic unity of man and God represented the pinnacle of Christianity for Nevin. Redemption only saved man from hell; the theanthropic unity truly brought man to God.<sup>73</sup>

Nevin wrote extensively about the "Church Question" concerning the development of the Church and the completed revelation of theanthropic unity. After multiple articles on the subject within *The Mercersburg Review*, even the editors of the *German Reformed Messenger*, who were more than sympathetic to Nevin's views, commented that "our head has become dizzy—We are at a *dead halt*." While still

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<sup>71</sup> John Williamson Nevin, *The Mystical Presence: A Vindication of the Reformed or Calvinistic Doctrine of the Holy Eucharist* (Philadelphia: S. R. Fisher, 1867), 14-15.

<sup>72</sup> Payne, 173.

<sup>73</sup> Nevin, *Mystical Presence*, 16-24.

approving of Nevin's work overall, he had gone too far in looking to the ideal church that he had forgotten about the present church.<sup>74</sup>

Nevin's Christianity had strong traces of mysticism and claimed to have a doctrine of the Eucharist that emanated directly from Calvin. He hailed the miracle of the Eucharist and its mysterious union of man to God. He condemned the "Puritan theory" for denying the miraculous nature of the Eucharist and also argued that "Calvin could not possibly have approved what appears to have been the sacramental doctrine of Edwards."<sup>75</sup> Schaff had much less concern for proving the nature and historical development of the theanthropic unity of man and God. Schaff's theory of development put more stress on historical events and causes than Nevin's theologically focused development. Both saw a logical development within Church history rather than static dogmas through the successive ages.

Schaff labeled Nevin an independent thinker. Schleiermacher, however, did influence Nevin's theology—though Nevin denied it according a reviewer of Nevin's 1848 book, *Antichrist; or the Spirit of Sect and Schism*. "Dr. Nevin's system, *as far as he goes*, is Schleiermacher's system," declared the reviewer from *The Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review*, a stalwart conservative journal dedicated to upholding orthodox Presbyterianism.<sup>76</sup> The reviewer faulted Nevin for his two versions of Christ, Schleiermacher's and the Church's: "Strauss says that the great majority of modern

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<sup>74</sup> "Literary Notices," *German Reformed Messenger*, September 17, 1851: 3334; italics in original.

<sup>75</sup> Nevin, *Mystical Presence*, 113-118.

<sup>76</sup> *The Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review* 20, no. 4 (1848): 629. For more on *The Princeton Review*, see: Charles H. Lippy, "The Princeton Review," in *Religious Periodicals of the United States: Academic and Scholarly Journals*, ed. Charles H. Lippy (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), 417-421

theologians, have made Schleiermacher's Christology, their own, nay, their darling and the child of their bosom. The old building with its towers and corridors, its wasteful halls and spacious apartments, he says, Schleiermacher could not undertake to repair. He therefore erected in its stead a new and modish pavilion, suited to modern tastes and modes of life." The reviewer criticized Nevin because he "wishes to live in both these houses at the same time." Nevin claimed to be Reformed but advocated views of Christianity that evangelical Christians found to be very foreign.<sup>77</sup> With these considerations, the reviewer found Nevin at fault for his German associations and tendencies. Like Schaff, the evangelical Christians rejected Nevin's work because it did not align with the consensus of evangelical Christianity in America. Indeed, Nevin forcefully rejected nearly everything evangelical, as evidenced by *The Anxious Bench* and *The Mystical Presence*.<sup>78</sup> Nevin's near conversion to Catholicism in 1851 also provided ammunition for opponents of the Mercersburg theology.

Reviewers often found Schaff guilty by association because of Nevin's views. In 1848, the reviewer from *The Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review* found himself disappointed with Schaff, noting,

We had looked to him as a kind of guardian of Dr. Nevin. His work on Protestantism, in which there was such a discriminating and definite assertion of the doctrine of justification by faith and of the normal authority of scripture, as the two great principles of Protestants, let us to hope that his influence would be really conservative. His chivalry, however, has led him to throw away his own standard and to raise that of his colleague. We are sorry for it. It is a real loss, for he has too much of an English mind to allow him to think that his new doctrine is the same

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<sup>77</sup> *The Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review* 20, no. 4 (1848): 629-630.

<sup>78</sup> John Williamson Nevin, *The Anxious Bench* (Chambersburg, PA: Weekly Messenger, 1843).

with the old. He is not the man to be the subject of the hallucination that he can live in two separate houses at the same time.<sup>79</sup>

Schaff stood by Nevin in spite of what many considered unorthodox or “Romish” assertions. Schaff had more orthodox views from an evangelical perspective than Nevin, yet Schaff garnered many of the same criticisms as his colleague. One critic considered Nevin to be the leader of the two, which only increased Schaff’s guilt, and furthermore added that “though we do not regard Dr. Schaff as being at the bottom of Dr. Nevin’s Romanism, we nevertheless think that the intimate association between them, and the silence of the former as to the anti-protestantism [*sic*] of the latter, and his continued laudation of him as a historian and theologian, justly expose him to the suspicions of the Protestant community.” Any adherence to the Mercersburg theology, anyway, cast a negative light on Schaff, but the critic at least credited Schaff for differing from Nevin on the worst of the offenses and holding to “justification, and the authority of the Scriptures as the only infallible rule of faith. On both these points he [Schaff] assumed...orthodox ground.”<sup>80</sup>

One critic ably summed up his concern by writing, “Were it not for his antecedents [Baur and the Tübingen School] and his associations [Nevin], his history would excite but little uneasiness, notwithstanding the blemishes to which we have referred.”<sup>81</sup> Schaff’s reviewers had significant reservations about his German background

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<sup>79</sup> *The Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review* 20, no. 4 (1848): 631.

<sup>80</sup> *The Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review* 26, no. 1 (1854): 151, 153, 154.

<sup>81</sup> *The Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review* 26, no. 1 (1854): 192. The “blemishes” mentioned in this article deal with Schaff’s theory of development and the pantheistic German ties in the theory of development. This subject will be treated more fully in the following chapter. See also: *The Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review* 20, no. 4 (1848): 629.



and his associations with Nevin, who advocated for German theological ideas among many other dogmas that were contrary to those of evangelical Christians. Whereas many of the criticisms Schaff received attacked the fruit of Schaff's work, these criticisms of Schaff reveal some of the few attacks directly at the root.

## CHAPTER III

## UNDERSTANDING SCHAFF'S WORKS AND STYLE

*The Structure and Themes within Schaff's Works*

Schaff certainly had some of the most prestigious (if not notorious) teachers and colleagues. He also had some of the best education the world had to offer, which gave one reviewer reason to write that “perhaps there is no man on American soil better qualified than Dr. Schaff to undertake the great enterprise [of writing a history of the church], of which this is but the first fruits. A German scholar of ripe attainments, a pupil of Baur and Dorner at Tubingen—but protesting decidedly against what he calls ‘the dangerous and antichristian extravagances of the skeptical school’ of the former—and afterwards a pupil of the great and excellent Neander....”<sup>1</sup> His unique background provided his already able mind with the modern German philosophy necessary to complete a comprehensive history of the Church.

Considering Schaff's influences, how would he then construct his history? “One possible response,” historian Klaus Penzel so eloquently answers, “might be as follows: to do church history in the shadow of Schleiermacher and Hegel, by grafting Baur onto Neander—just as Baur, in Lord Acton's apt characterization ‘grafted Hegel on Ranke,’ and by ignoring Strauss. In sum, this kind of response is precisely Schaff's position as

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<sup>1</sup> “History of the Apostolic Church,” *Christian Inquirer*, March 4, 1854, 2.

church historian.”<sup>2</sup> Schaff’s influence from and use of Baur, Neander, and others had clear implications in his works, especially concerning Schaff’s theory of organic development. To his American readers, Schaff’s use—or misuse depending on the critic—of German theology and historical philosophies upset the anti-institutional mindset and Common Sense reasoning of evangelical Christianity.

Schaff’s address to the Mercersburg Theological seminary in 1845, which was later published as *The Principle of Protestantism*, marked the beginning of his foray into the heated debates of American theology.<sup>3</sup> *The Principle of Protestantism* was a seminal work with many reaching implications, and John W. Nevin’s translation and introduction to the work solidified the bond between the two men that became known as the

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<sup>2</sup> Klaus Penzel, “Church History in Context: The Case of Philip Schaff,” in *Our Common History as Christians: Essays in Honor of Albert C. Outler*, edited by John Deschner, Leroy Howe and Klaus Penzel (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), 233. Schaff did not completely ignore Strauss. In *History of the Apostolic Church*, Schaff calls Strauss “rather more daring and consistent than his master.” In regards to Strauss’s antichristian *Leben Jesu* (1835), Schaff comments that Strauss “reduces the life of the Godman, with icy, wanton hand, to a dry skeleton of everyday history, and resolves all gospel accounts of miracles, partly on the ground of pretended contradictions, but chiefly on account of the offensiveness of their supernatural character to the carnal mind, into a mythical picture of the idea of the Messiah, as it grew unconsciously from the imagination of the first Christians; thus sinking the gospels, virtually, to the level of heathen mythology. This, of course, puts an end to the idea of a divine origin of Christianity, and turns its apologetic history of eighteen hundred years into an air-castle, built on pure illusions; a pleasing dream; a tragi-comedy, entitled: ‘Much ado about nothing’” (Philip Schaff, *History of the Apostolic Church with a General Introduction to Church History*, trans. Edward D. Yeomans [New York: Charles Scribner, 1854], 111). Schaff is exceptionally critical of Strauss because Strauss’ history attacks the foundation of Christianity: that Jesus became a man, lived the life no one else could live, died for all, rose from death, and gives life and salvation to those who believe in him. Schaff was critical of Neander for doubting the genuineness of 2 Peter; how much more repulsive would denying the life, death, and resurrection of Christ be to Schaff!

<sup>3</sup> Philip Schaff, *The Principle of Protestantism as Related to the Present State of the Church*, trans. John W. Nevin (Chambersburg, PA: Publication Office of the German Reformed Church, 1845).

Mercersburg theology. Schaff's work continued to be referenced and attacked long after its initial publication. J. J. Janeway's extensive and condemning book, *Antidote to the Poison of Popery*, for example, came out eleven years after the publication of *The Principle of Protestantism*.<sup>4</sup>

Schaff followed up *The Principle of Protestantism* with *What is Church History?*<sup>5</sup> His second work was a protracted edition of his first. The next significant work in English came out in 1853; *History of the Apostolic Church* incorporated the previous two works in an extended, 134-page introduction and also included the history of the primitive church.<sup>6</sup> Schaff published his *History of the Apostolic Church* in German originally in 1851 as *Geschichte der Christlichen Kirche*.<sup>7</sup> In 1858, Schaff released the first volume of his *History of the Christian Church*, which again recapitulated the previous works and extended of his Church history through Constantine.<sup>8</sup> These four major volumes formed the bulk of his work on church history prior to the Civil War.<sup>9</sup>

For Schaff, Christianity formed the foundation of his entire being and body of work; it was indeed his *raison d'être*. While the Tübingen School produced a corpus of excellent research, Schaff pointed out that history and theology without faith is at a

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<sup>4</sup> J. J. Janeway, *Antidote to the Poison of Popery, in the Writings and Conduct of Professors Nevin & Schaff, Professors in the German Reformed Church, in the U. S. of America* (New Brunswick, NJ: Press of J. Terhune, 1856).

<sup>5</sup> Philip Schaff, *What is Church History? A Vindication of the Idea of Historical Development* (Philadelphia: Lippincott & Co., 1846).

<sup>6</sup> Philip Schaff, *History of the Apostolic Church with a General Introduction to Church History*, trans. Edward D. Yeomans (New York: Charles Scribner, 1854).

<sup>7</sup> Philip Schaff, *Geschichte der Christlichen Kirche von ihrer Gründung bis auf die Gegenwart* (Mercersburg, PA: Gelbftbering des Berfaffers, 1851).

<sup>8</sup> Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, 3rd ed., vol. 1 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1910).

<sup>9</sup> It is worth adding that all of the books, except *What is Church History?*, are available for free online from Google Books (books.google.com).

disadvantage and that “we can never make theology too earnest or practical; for it has to do with nothing less than the everlasting weal or woe of undying souls.”<sup>10</sup>

Schaff undoubtedly presented a high view of Jesus Christ, and he explicated his high Christology in stressing that “Christ is the *centre and turning-point*, as well as the *key*, of *all* history.” Man’s role in this divine history consisted in “the extension of his kingdom and the glorifying of his name. Around this central sun of the moral universe, which has risen in Jesus of Nazareth, all nations, created for him as their common Saviour, all significant movements and truly historical events are revolving, at various distances, and must, directly or indirectly, consciously or unconsciously, aid in building up his glorious kingdom.” Schaff understood that all history, B.C. or A.D., pointed to Christ and pointed individuals to find in Christ what their hearts yearn for: “the only true religion for men.”<sup>11</sup>

While Schaff admitted that Jesus was a Jew, he saw Jesus as “in the highest sense the Son of Man, the second Adam, the representative Head and Regenerator of the whole race.”<sup>12</sup> Schaff lauded the Jews for their production of some amazing persons, such as Neander, and for their patient endurance through trials. He saw in the Jews a people, however, that was little changed since the time of imperial Rome:

Then they excited as much as they do now the mingled contempt and wonder of the world; they were as remarkable then for contrasts of intellectual beauty and striking ugliness, wretched poverty and princely wealth; they liked onions and garlic, and dealt in old clothes, broken glass, sulphur [*sic*] matches, but knew how to push themselves from poverty and filth into wealth and influence; they were rigid monotheists and scrupulous legalists who would strain out a gnat and swallow a camel; then as now

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<sup>10</sup> Schaff, *History of the Apostolic Church*, 98.

<sup>11</sup> Schaff, *History of the Apostolic Church*, 138; italics in original.

<sup>12</sup> Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, 147.

they were temperate, sober, industrious, well regulated and affectionate in their domestic relations, and careful for the religious education of their children.<sup>13</sup>

Nevertheless, Schaff's "Jesus, while moving within the outward forms of the Jewish religion of his age, was far above it...."<sup>14</sup> Schaff did not stray far from the cultural norms that deemphasized Jesus' Jewish background. In this sense, his histories did not rebel against the dominant evangelical Christian tradition.<sup>15</sup> No critics bothered to praise or criticize Schaff for his viewpoints on the issue of Jesus as a Jew because he did not ruffle any feathers.

Schaff viewed church history as a category of study falling between exegetical and systematic theology. Church history, as it comprises everything from Pentecost to the present, "is by far the most copious and extensive." Church history for the historian ends a short time before the present to allow for fair and unbiased treatment, but ultimately church history ends with the final judgment. The book of Revelation, thus, "is a prophetic church history in grand symbols, which, like the Old Testament prophecies, can never be fully understood, until all are fulfilled."<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, 146-147.

<sup>14</sup> Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, 156.

<sup>15</sup> Elizabeth A. Clark, *Founding the Fathers: Early Church History and Protestant Professors in Nineteenth-Century America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 123.

<sup>16</sup> Schaff, *History of the Apostolic Church*, 18. "The *beginning* of church history is properly the incarnation of the Son of God, the entrance of the new principle of light and life into humanity. The life of Jesus Christ forms the unchangeable theanthropic foundation of the whole structure. Hence Gieseler, Niedner, and other historians embrace a short sketch of this in their systems, while Neander has devoted it to a separate work. But since the church, as an organic union of the disciples of Jesus, comes into view first on the day of Pentecost, we may take this point as the beginning; and this is preferable" (Schaff, *History of the Apostolic Church*, 17).

As a philosopher of history, Schaff passionately argued that history should not be “a mere aggregate of names, dates, and deeds, more or less accidental, without fixed plan or sure purpose. It is a living organism, whose parts have an inward, vital connection, each requiring and completing the rest.” God guides history with his providential hand towards the end of glorifying “the Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier of the world” even while all of mankind retains free will within secular and sacred history. Schaff saw history as needing faithfulness to the events of history (objective history) but also as needing faithfulness in the reproduction of those events as living, organic history (subjective history).<sup>17</sup> History, thus, necessarily demands attention to God’s supernatural work within history because God is the one who guides history. Out of the God’s providential hand and in conjunction with man’s free will comes the unfolding saga of human history: development. Development does not function in a mechanical fashion but evolves and grows organically. Schaff often compared organic development to the stages of human life.<sup>18</sup>

As a final general point regarding the content of his history of early Christianity, Schaff clearly saw in the early church “its unstained purity and primitive freshness of doctrine and life, and its extraordinary spiritual gifts, working harmoniously together, and providing, by their creative and controlling power, for all the wants and relations of the infant church.”<sup>19</sup> He only reluctantly alluded to the conflict in the early church from Acts 15 and Galatians 2 and reassured his readers that “the collision was merely temporary,

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<sup>17</sup> Schaff, *History of the Apostolic Church*, 1-3.

<sup>18</sup> Schaff, *Principle of Protestantism*, 50-51.

<sup>19</sup> Schaff, *History of the Apostolic Church*, 187; see also Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, 198-199.

but significantly reveals the profound commotion and fermentation of the apostolic age, and foreshadowed future antagonisms and reconciliations in the church.”<sup>20</sup> Ultimately what was more important to Schaff about the apostolic period was not the conflict in the church, such as what Baur saw, but that the apostolic period was an age of miracles and purity and produced the “the immoveable groundwork” for the entire Church and its history with the divinely inspired canon.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, Schaff characterized the period as “rudimental and pre-formative, and at the same time typical and prophetic, for the whole history of the church...” and that it “contains the living germs of all the following periods, personages, and tendencies.”<sup>22</sup> What it means to have the seeds for the rest of history was part of his theory of development, which will be dealt with in the following chapters.

### *In Praise of Schaff's Style and Readability*

Schaff's overwhelmingly agreeable and enjoyable style of writing, especially within *History of the Apostolic Church* and *History of the Christian Church*, has been a feature of his works that has been overlooked and understudied. Historians have typically

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<sup>20</sup> Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, 202. Schaff also briefly remarked about Ananias and Sapphira: “Yet even in this primitive apostolic community [in regards to Acts 2.42-47] inward corruption early appeared, and with it also the severity of discipline and self-purification, in the terrible sentence of Peter on the hypocritical Ananias and Sapphira” [Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, 249]. Was it really Peter who condemned Ananias and Sapphira to death? Peter merely confronts Ananias and Sapphira about their sin but does not issue the condemnation of death; see Acts 5.1-11.

<sup>21</sup> Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, 198-199.

<sup>22</sup> Schaff, *History of the Apostolic Church*, 187; Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, 199.



ignored this feature of Schaff's works and instead have focused on Schaff's content and influences. While the content of the history is important, Schaff's style and readability are just as important for this study. Dreadfully boring histories do not appeal to anyone outside of those historians who specialize in that particular field. If a great book can be defined by its ability to teach, move, and delight, sadly many works of history only teach—and then only poorly because few much remember mind-numbing reading. Economically, too, enjoyable reading is important because it sells. Only a university library would buy a book entitled *Marriage Litigation in Medieval England*, but another fast-paced book by Bill O'Reilly on a famous figure's assassination would be a guaranteed bestseller.

Regardless of Schaff's contemporaries' conclusions on the content of his histories, nearly every reviewer praised Schaff for his style. When reading Schaff's work now, regardless of if one views the confessional style of history as antiquated and disdains his unabashed, literal conclusions from the New Testament canon as fodder fit only for those easily fleeced by religion, it seems as though it could have been written just recently as popular history book.

Schaff is positively delightful to read, and he intentionally wrote that way. In regards to how to write history, Schaff explained, "This is an art. It must not simply recount events, but reproduce the development of the church in living process. History is not a heap of skeletons, but an organism filled and ruled by a reasonable soul." Language itself, Schaff admitted, creates difficulty in creating a history that shows chronological progression but also accounts for concomitant themes within the chronology. Schaff emphasized that "the historian, moreover, must make his work readable and interesting,

without violating truth. Some parts of history are dull and wearisome; but, upon the whole, the truth of history is ‘stranger than fiction.’ It is God’s own epos. It needs no embellishment. It speaks for itself if told with earnestness, vivacity, and freshness.” As is unfortunately the case for so many works of history now, many historians “represent the past as a dead corpse,” which is why Schaff concluded that “church histories are so little read outside professional circles.”<sup>23</sup> He wrote with the intention of having his work readable for the masses.

Schaff undoubtedly wrote as a scholar even as he intended his histories to be read by both scholars and non-academics. One reviewer of *Geschichte der Christlichen Kirche* commented that “the book is eminently scholarlike [*sic*] and learned, full of matter, not of crude materials crammed together for the nonce by labour-saving tricks, but of various and well digested knowledge, the result of systematic training and of long continued study.” The book was found to be free from filler and full and complete in notes and text. Schaff addressed every issue with originality, and “with all his zeal for German ways and notions, Dr. Schaff never verges upon nonsense. He always knows what he means and how to make it known to others.”<sup>24</sup>

Nevertheless, Schaff’s style makes the work feel as if anyone could read it. In 1854, the editor of *The Theological and Literary Journal* noted that the history of Christianity needed such a readable work.<sup>25</sup> If the comment had been made just recently

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<sup>23</sup> Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, 22, 24-25.

<sup>24</sup> *The Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review* 23, no. 4 (October 1851): 652-654.

<sup>25</sup> The Editor, “ART. VI—The History of the Apostolic Church with a General Introduction to Church History,” *The Theological and Literary Journal* 6, no. 4, (April 1854): 668.

about the need for a readable church history, Schaff's *History of the Christian Church* or *History of the Apostolic Church* would ably fit that description for an American evangelical Christian even today. Perhaps the books would be too long for the average American, but his infectious style keeps the reader engaged in the content and not in daydreams elsewhere, unlike so many scholarly histories.

Even reviewers critical of every portion of the content of Schaff's history praised Schaff for his style in various manners.<sup>26</sup> One reviewer remarked, "There is a manly frankness in it, which will command respect," despite criticizing Schaff in every other way.<sup>27</sup> A review in the Unitarian *Christian Inquirer* stated that "the style is animated, at times marked with great rhetorical beauty, vigorous and expressive."<sup>28</sup> "To its learning, skillful arrangement, graphic descriptions, and elegant generalizations," declared the *New York Evangelist*, "we are disposed to render only praise."<sup>29</sup> The *German Reformed Messenger* presented an extract from Schaff's history with a preface about how much the public has loved the book and that Schaff deserves every word of the praise: "Never has there a work appeared in print which combines so much excellence in the way of composition, with so much deep literary research, pervaded, at the same time, throughout

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<sup>26</sup> "Dr. Schaff's Church History," *German Reformed Messenger*, March 15, 1854, 4054; "ART. VII—Review of Current Literature: Theology and Church History," *Christian Examiner* 66, no. 3 (May 1859): 438.

<sup>27</sup> "ART. I—Schaff's History and Mercersburg Theology," *American Quarterly Church Review and Ecclesiastical Register* 12, no. 3 (October 1859): 386.

<sup>28</sup> "History of the Apostolic Church," *Christian Inquirer*, March 4, 1854, 2; see also, "Notices of New Publications: History of the Christian Church," *Christian Inquirer*, February 26, 1859, 1: "It is marked by the same characteristics of a rich, and at times, rhetorical style, ample learning, and enthusiastic interest in his subject."

<sup>29</sup> "Dr. Schaff's Church History," *New York Evangelist*, February 16, 1854, 26.

by a vein of deep-toned piety. It abounds with passages of great beauty and sublimity.”<sup>30</sup> The editor of *The Theological and Literary Journal*, before presenting many strictures, stated, “the style is clear, vigorous, and sufficiently ornate; the narrative simple, direct, and graphic; the delineations of character, though in a measure fanciful, are generally discriminating, and rise in some instances to elegance.”<sup>31</sup> Other authors may have been considered more informative, but the *New Englander*, a liberal Congregationalist journal, considered Schaff much more interesting to read.<sup>32</sup> “On the church history of the first century,” wrote the *New Englander*, “there is no book in the English language, so thorough, so full, so readable, and at the same time so satisfactory on the whole.”<sup>33</sup> Even one of Schaff’s most critical reviewers, J. W. Proudfit, wrote, “He writes in a flowing and graceful style, conceives strongly and paints vividly, and shows ability of a high order in the disposition of his materials.”<sup>34</sup>

Schaff’s German education could not even prevent his work from being enjoyable. *The Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review* considered Edward D. Yeoman’s translation of *History of the Apostolic Church* full of “freshness and idiomatic vigour... a

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<sup>30</sup> “Dr. Schaff’s Church History,” *German Reformed Messenger*, January 4, 1854, 4014.

<sup>31</sup> The Editor, “ART. VI—The History of the Apostolic Church with a General Introduction to Church History,” *The Theological and Literary Journal* 6, no. 4 (April 1854): 667.

<sup>32</sup> *New Englander* 17, no. 65 (February 1859): 263.

<sup>33</sup> “ART. VI—Prof. Schaff’s Church History,” *New Englander* 12, no. 46 (May 1854): 245; the author immediately adds: “All this, however, does not mean that in our judgment that the work is unexceptionable [not without fault]. Few books, not included in the canon of inspired scripture, are wholly unexceptional, if the author dares to think for himself or does anything to waken and stimulate thought in his readers.”

<sup>34</sup> J. W. Proudfit, “ART. I—Dr. Schaff’s Works on Church History,” *The New Brunswick Review* 1, no. 1 (May 1854): 7.

very satisfactory and trustworthy exhibition of his author.”<sup>35</sup> Schaff has “an easy and flowing style, quite remarkable in a work originally written in German.”<sup>36</sup> *The Universalist Quarterly* deemed his works enjoyable to read for the way “he blends matter and art...,” which was a sentiment that they could not extend to most German authors.<sup>37</sup> A reviewer from *Christian Watchman and Reflector* similarly commented that “it is a book of rare power, destined to make a broad and deep mark upon the American mind.... The style is wholly free from the lumbering sentence which render German works so tedious to most English readers; it is simple, easy and elegant, often condensed into great vigor, and rising into passages of true eloquence.... The patient reader finds the rich juices of generous culture exuding on every page. There is no tessellated mosaic of learning, artificially and painfully wrought; no idle parade of authorities cheaply obtained by others’ toil.”<sup>38</sup> Unlike Neander, Schaff had a strong sense of direction and chronology and writes with clarity.<sup>39</sup>

A few reviewers, however, found Schaff to be unoriginal despite the enjoyable reading. The *New Englander*, although commenting, “Dr. Schaff has written a perspicuous, animated, often eloquent, and always trustworthy narrative,” considered the work at best a supplement to Neander because Schaff relied on secondary sources too

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<sup>35</sup> *The Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review* 26, no. 1 (January 1854): 148-149; see also: Proudfit, 7.

<sup>36</sup> “ART. VII—Review of Current Literature: Theology and Church History,” *Christian Examiner* 66, no. 3 (May 1859): 438. The reviewer added afterward: “Our praise of the book must stop with its form and structure”.

<sup>37</sup> *The Universalist Quarterly and General Review* 14 (October 1857): 428.

<sup>38</sup> “Schaff’s Church History,” *Christian Watchman and Reflector* 35, no. 8, February 23, 1854: 30.

<sup>39</sup> John W. Nevin, “Schaff’s Church History,” *Mercersburg Review* 3, no. 3 (May 1851): 298.

heavily and did not delve deeply enough into the original sources. “It is a copy,” concluded the *New Englander*, “in better colors perhaps, of a master-piece, compared with the less finished but grander original.”<sup>40</sup> Another critic in the minority dismissed Schaff for being a papist and called him a “sentimental writer.”<sup>41</sup> These sorts of criticisms were overwhelmed by positive reviews of Schaff’s academic prowess and enjoyable style.

Because his histories had been penned with such readability, Schaff’s books were marketed towards scholars and non-academics. *The American Theological Review*, a liberal Presbyterian journal aimed at preaching Calvinist doctrines to those caught up in the revivalist and transcendentalist movements, remarked about the pleasing style and readability and added, “One great charm of Dr. Schaff’s book is the pulse of fervent, earnest, unaffected piety which everywhere beats through it. Though warm and glowing, it is not at all mystical or sentimental, but robust and practical.”<sup>42</sup> Not only was it enjoyable, Schaff was practical and applicable for his readers regardless of educational background. Newspapers and journals encouraged students to read Schaff, even though reviewers had some reservations about his opinions, because “no work within our knowledge can be more safely recommended to the student, who would thoroughly understand the history of Christianity, from the ‘day of Pentecost’ to the close of the first

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<sup>40</sup> *New Englander* 17, no. 65 (February 1859): 263-264.

<sup>41</sup> “B,” “Dr. Proudfit and Dr. Schaff’s Church History,” *German Reformed Messenger*, June 21, 1854, 4111.

<sup>42</sup> “ART. X—Schaff’s Church History,” *The American Theological Review* 2 (May 1859): 323. For more information on *The American Theological Review*, see: Linda K. Varkonda, “American Presbyterian and Theological Review,” in *Religious Periodicals of the United States: Academic and Scholarly Journals*, ed. Charles H. Lippy (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), 27-30.

century.”<sup>43</sup> His books were available on both sides of the Atlantic, and, in regard to *History of the Apostolic Church* being available in Europe, the *German Reformed Messenger* remarked that even there, “the influence which it must thus exert, will be powerful and far reaching.”<sup>44</sup> In part due to the popularity of *History of the Apostolic Church*, *The Christian Review* wrote, “we advert with pleasure to the signs in this country of a growing interest in the history of the Christian church.”<sup>45</sup>

In order to obtain a copy of Schaff’s *History of the Apostolic Church*, one had the opportunity to purchase it from the *German Reformed Messenger* for only three dollars a copy, and there was even a discount for buying in bulk. When making note that it once again had more copies to sell (perhaps after selling out), the *German Reformed Messenger* added in its advertisement, “It is so popular and attractive in its style, and at the same time so truly learned and critical, a combination rarely to be met with any one author, that it must work its way into every portion of the Christian Church. The opposition it has met with in certain quarters weighs not a feather against the vast amount of reliable testimony in its favor, and serves only to increase the attention of the public to it.”<sup>46</sup> While *Geschichte der Christlichen Kirche* had been restricted to a limited printing, *History of the Apostolic Church* received significant notice, had many more copies printed, “and every attempt has been made to secure for it a general circulation.”<sup>47</sup> The *German Reformed Messenger* urged pastors to buy it, and if they could not afford it, the

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<sup>43</sup> *New Englander* 12, no. 45 (February 1854): 176.

<sup>44</sup> “Dr. Schaff’s History of the Apostolic Church,” *German Reformed Messenger*, December 6, 1854, 4206.

<sup>45</sup> “ART. I—Schaff’s Apostolic History,” *The Christian Review* 20, no. 79 (January 1855): 22.

<sup>46</sup> “Schaff’s Church History,” *German Reformed Messenger*, April 12, 1854, 4070.

<sup>47</sup> Proudfit, 7.

newspaper encouraged parishioners to purchase it for them. It could be mailed anywhere under 3000 miles for fifty-one cents. “Every family ought to be in possession of the work.”<sup>48</sup>

A year later, another review from the *German Reformed Messenger* made a similar case. While the author understood that many regular church-members would fancy Schaff’s work to be too difficult for them to understand and would think it were “intended only for the learned,” the author reassured the readers that the money would not be wasted in the purchase of the book. In fact, as the author clarifies, “It is indeed a work which bespeaks the writer to be a scholar, and abounds with evidences of the fact, that it is written with great care and study, and that its author has mastered many a difficult problem and climbed many a craggy cliff, before he reached the high point on the mount of the muses, and before he put his pen to paper. But...it is adapted—and *well adapted*, for any person of ordinary intelligence.”<sup>49</sup> The author concluded with an exhortation that if a reader is blessed enough so “that *three dollars* could be spared and you not be any worse off by next Christmas or New Year’s day—suppose you would just send for this work and present it to your pastor!”<sup>50</sup>

An advertisement in *The American Theological Review* commented in regards to *History of the Christian Church* that “the work is equally well adapted to the needs of the students and the edification of the general reader.” Every review mentioned in the advertisement—*Mercersburg Review*, *Methodist Quarterly Review*, *Princeton Review*,

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<sup>48</sup> “Schaff’s Church History,” *German Reformed Messenger*, April 12, 1854, 4070.

<sup>49</sup> “Schaff’s Church History,” *German Reformed Messenger*, January 31, 1855, 4238-4239; italics in original.

<sup>50</sup> “Schaff’s Church History,” *German Reformed Messenger*, January 31, 1855, 4239; italics in original.



*New Englander*, and the *North American Review*—has statements in some fashion about how enjoyable the style is and how well the book is written.<sup>51</sup> Another advertisement published on multiple occasions has excerpts from fifteen different newspapers from around the country, most of which are quoted with laudations of Schaff’s style and readability. The advertisement quoted the *New York Examiner* as saying, “This volume, whether as a book for general reading or as a text-book [*sic*] for students, is one of the best—perhaps we ought to say the very best—with which we are acquainted, on the eventful periods it embraces.”<sup>52</sup>

The *German Reformed Messenger* also induced its readers to get their friends to subscribe to the paper as well as to circulate *History of the Apostolic Church* among the general population with a generous offer: “We now make the standing offer to send free of postage a copy of the work [*History of the Apostolic Church*] to anyone who will send us six new subscribers for the ‘Messenger’ accompanied with the cash, at any time in the course of a month, or twice that number of cash for the subscribers for the ‘Kirchenzeitung.’ The work can be had in the German or English language, as may be preferred. Quite a number of persons have availed themselves of our former proposition, and we will be glad to find many others availing themselves of the present one.”<sup>53</sup> A month later, the paper reiterated the offer.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> “Notices from the Quarterly Reviews,” *The American Theological Review* 3 (August 1859): 578. For the 535-page volume, the cost was as little as \$2.50 depending on the binding style.

<sup>52</sup> *German Reformed Messenger*, February 23, 1859, 3; *German Reformed Messenger*, March 9, 1859, 3.

<sup>53</sup> “A New Proposition,” *German Reformed Messenger*, July 14, 1854, 4106.

<sup>54</sup> “New Brunswick Review,” *German Reformed Messenger*, August 23, 1854, 4146

While these excerpts from newspapers and journals exhibit contemporary perspectives on Schaff's readable style, they more importantly illustrate how Schaff's works were within reach, tangibly and intellectually, for readers outside of the clergy and academia. The *German Reformed Messenger*, especially, encouraged a wide circulation. As the reviews and advertisements show, Schaff achieved his goal of having a readable history of the Church. He wrote his histories in a way that presented scholarly ideas and theories that were applicable to everyone, everywhere. His works' accessibility amplified how Schaff's Christianity disrupted the consensus of evangelical Christianity. Consequently his critics from both academic and popular religious presses condemned his aberrations by attacking him for being too Catholic or too pantheistic.

## CHAPTER IV

## SCHAFF THE PANTHEIST

Philip Schaff did not singlehandedly create the theory of organic development for Church history *ex nihilo*. The theory of development has a long history, which, due to the scope of this work, will only be briefly treated.<sup>1</sup> Schaff placed the theory of development as the core component of his philosophy of history, and thus it became the central target of his critics' concerns. While historically and theologically sound, the theory of development stood in opposition to American theology. It emphasized institutions over individuals and historically based theology over Common Sense reasoning. A few critics took issue with the theory of development for being a theory. More critics found the theory to be sufficient evidence for denunciations of Schaff as a pantheist, which he was most definitely not. The latter criticism reveals how dangerous evangelical Christians considered aspects of his works and how his studies opposed the hegemony of evangelical Christianity.

Schaff's variation of the theory of development essentially endeavored to show how Church history, guided by the hand of God, had a logical development from Pentecost to the present. Doctrine, rather than being settled and complete, evolved out of

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<sup>1</sup> The theory of development is more fully treated in James Hastings Nichols, *Romanticism in American Theology: Nevin and Schaff at Mercersburg* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), 107-120; and, Klaus Penzel, "The Reformation Goes West: The Notion of Historical Development in the Thought of Philip Schaff," *The Journal of Religion* 62, no. 3 (July 1982): 219-241. See also chapter two for some of Schaff's influences in regards to the theory of development.

the history of the Church, and history is a teleological journey where every step of the way created the means for the existence of the modern church, which God intended as the pinnacle of the Church militant. Although the theory was grounded in history, it had its ultimate end in theology. That is, while Schaff intended the theory to be scientific, it existed to reaffirm his theological convictions.<sup>2</sup>

Whereas the early church had the advantage in proximity to Christ and the benefit of having been taught by the Apostles, Schaff set forth a controversial conclusion that “the church is not to be viewed as a thing at once finished and perfect, but as a historical fact, as a human society, subject to the laws of history, to genesis, growth, development. Only the dead is done and stagnant.”<sup>3</sup> While “in its own nature, as a new order of life, Christianity has been complete from the beginning...,” Schaff argued that the Church has grown through “periods of infancy, youth, manhood, and old age.” Schaff did not believe in a Church that was eternally static; rather, he viewed its essential nature as complete but the expression of its nature as developing throughout its life. The Church would have failed in its progress only if it were dead.<sup>4</sup>

Throughout this metaphorical life, the nature of Christianity did not—and could not—change, but the Church’s understanding of Christ’s life and work continued to deepen throughout history.<sup>5</sup> Because God is the same God with the same qualities and attributes throughout all ages, and because nothing can transcend the scriptures as

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<sup>2</sup> Henry Warner Bowden, “Science and the Idea of Church History, an American Debate,” *Church History* 36, no. 3 (September 1967): 316.

<sup>3</sup> Philip Schaff, *History of the Apostolic Church with a General Introduction to Church History*, trans. Edward D. Yeomans (New York: Charles Scribner, 1854), 9.

<sup>4</sup> Schaff, *Principle of Protestantism*, 50-51.

<sup>5</sup> Schaff, *Principle of Protestantism*, 51.

revealed in the Bible, doctrine cannot show improvement or advancement. One cannot surpass Christ, and trying to improve on Christ and Christ's work would be a descent back to Judaism or heathenism.<sup>6</sup>

Schaff takes an approach similar to the author of Hebrews in explaining how progress and development does occur. Like the earthly temple only being a shadow of the heavenly one, a divine, pure, perfect Church exists as well as an “*actual manifestation*” of the Church. How the Church responds to Christ has changed through the ages as “the church on earth advances from one degree of purity, knowledge, holiness, to another . . .”<sup>7</sup> The path was not smooth, and inevitably the Church took some steps backward. Schaff considered the book of Romans alone more worthy than all pieces of Patristic literature combined. One of the earliest pieces of Christian literature outside the New Testament, *The Shepherd of Hermas*, already showed the legalistic nature that was brewing in the church.<sup>8</sup> Schaff, though seeing evidences of the doctrine of grace through history, declared that “when we bring the soteriological ground principle of the Reformation [justification by faith] into the light of the New Testament, particularly the epistles of Paul, we find it ratified here with such clear and distinct enunciation, that we are ready to wonder why the Church should not have come to the knowledge of it a great while sooner.”<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Schaff, *History of the Apostolic Church*, 10.

<sup>7</sup> Schaff, *History of the Apostolic Church*, 10-11; italics in original.

<sup>8</sup> Elizabeth A. Clark, *Founding the Fathers: Early Church History and Protestant Professors in Nineteenth-Century America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 194-195.

<sup>9</sup> Schaff, *Principle of Protestantism*, 52.

The history of the Church mimics a stereotypical life wherein the person is relatively pure but immature as an infant, rebellious as a teenager, and eventually matures and enters adulthood. Schaff's reasonable understanding of a dynamic church history necessitated a philosophy of organic development. He explained that "development is properly identical with history itself; for history is life, and all life involves growth, evolution and progress. Our bodily existence, all our mental faculties, the Christian life, and the sanctification of every individual, constitute such a process of development from the lower to the higher. Why should not the same law hold, when applied to the whole, the communion which is made up of individuals?" If people change and grow through the process of justification, sanctification, and glorification, the church will also experience the same transformation. Christ speaks of development with the parable of the mustard seed and the parable of the yeast in the bread, so the concept was in fact Biblical.<sup>10</sup>

The development must be organic because the agency for change comes from the life within the Church as the Church responds to history, which allows for an unchangeable God and a malleable Church. Schaff also added that "what is untrue and imperfect in an earlier stage is done away by that which follows; what is true and essential is preserved, and made the living germ of further development. The history of all Christian nations, and all times, from the birth of Christ to the final judgment, forms one connected whole; and only in its totality does it exhibit the entire fullness of the new creation." Throughout the development, the believers are still subject to sin and folly,

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<sup>10</sup> Schaff, "German Theology and the Church Question," 138. For the parable of the mustard seed, see Matthew 13.31-32, Mark 4.31-32, and Luke 13.18-19; for the parable of the yeast in the bread, see Matthew 13.33, Luke 13.20-21. Schaff also references Paul's use of growth in the individuals and the church; see 1 Corinthians 3.5-9.

leading to error in the church. The struggle will continue until Christ returns.

Nevertheless, the church, despite sin, sectarianism, and stagnant belief, “moves *uninterruptedly onward*, and *must* finally reach its divinely appointed end. *Ecclesia non potest deficere.*”<sup>11</sup> One reviewer aptly summed up Schaff’s theory of development by writing, “The Christianity of Christ, His inspired Apostles, and the New Testament, is, in his judgment, absolutely perfect. Development has regard only to the realization of the Divine ideal in the actual life of the Christian Church.”<sup>12</sup>

Schaff’s German influences here, especially from Baur, are evident in how he sees the Church as responding to history rather than being static. Unlike Baur, however, Schaff tied the factual, supernatural life of Jesus to the organic development so that history has a divine purpose as it develops within the Church. While the argument clearly does not side with the God-free historical development of the Tübingen School, the argument still posed problems for evangelical Christians.

One problem came from Schaff’s rejection of how American evangelicals clung to the Reformer’s powerful concept of *sola scriptura*. Schaff’s theory of development stood in contrast to the evangelicals who demanded that only the Bible determined doctrine, and this issue affected the majority of American Protestants. Against the idea of *sola scriptura*, he replied:

But who has made you an infallible *interpreter* of this Word? Has not this Word already existed in the Church before the sixteenth century, and as such been highly honored, read, transcribed, translated and commented upon? Whence then have you the canon, save directly from the faithful

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<sup>11</sup> Schaff, *History of the Apostolic Church*, 11-12; italics in original; “*Ecclesia non potest deficere*” means “The church cannot fail.”

<sup>12</sup> “ART. X—Schaff’s Church History,” *The American Theological Review* 2 (May 1859): 322.

collection and transmission of the Catholic Church? Who furnishes you the proof of the genuineness and integrity of the apostolical writings, except the testimonies of the ancient ecclesiastical authors? If already the immediate disciples of the Apostles, if Ignatius, Clement and Polycarp, if the fathers and martyrs of the second and third centuries, have radically misunderstood the New Testament, what guaranty have we then that *you*, in the nineteenth century, understand it properly throughout, wherever you may differ from them? Are you then made of better stuff than the Confessors and Martyrs of the blooming period of the Church? Have you done and suffered more for Christ?<sup>13</sup>

He pointed out that those who argue for *sola scriptura* can argue all they want for their doctrines, but that does not make what they argue for correct. How can they know what is true if a disciple of John failed to understand the gospel? Such a powerful argument spawned controversy because it attacked the foundation of American Protestantism.

Schaff, however, did not think that the theory of development should pose any issues to American Christians. In fact, he saw the critics of the theory of development as dishonoring American theology. He considered Charles Hodge and J. W. Proudfit as providing the only reasonable arguments, and even Proudfit's responses lacked some integrity. The other critics could furnish only "slander and abuse, instead of earnest, solid argument." Schaff viewed many of his opponents, at least in 1853, as small-minded and hoped one day "that they will be able and willing to defend themselves in a truly scholarly and gentlemanly way... which, however, in our estimation, could only be done by assuming a much more historical and at the same time far less bigoted and exclusive

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<sup>13</sup> Schaff, "German Theology and the Church Question," 133-134; italics in original.



position that they have occupied heretofore.”<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, his critics found many faults, even if their criticisms were, in fact, bigoted and ahistorical.

*The Facts and Nothing Else*

In 1859, one reviewer of Schaff from *The American Theological Review*, a Presbyterian journal largely devoted to articles on doctrine, commented that “church history is but just beginning to be cultivated amongst us by a proper method, with a proper zeal.”<sup>15</sup> Due to Europe being beset with all kinds of issues of religion, the reviewer considered America the only suitable place where a faithful and truthful history of the Church could be written. Both the lay and the learned needed a good history of the church, but even Germany could not complete the task because “it is only in this new world that the Reformation has wrought itself out unhindered; not perfectly even here as yet, but vastly more so than anywhere else.”<sup>16</sup> Schaff’s histories, however, for many reviewers failed to be the right histories for the Church because of his rejection of the consensus of evangelical Christianity.

Before the Civil War, many reviewers and theologians adhered to the idea that

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<sup>14</sup> Schaff, “German Theology and the Church Question,” 140.

<sup>15</sup> “ART. X—Schaff’s Church History,” *The American Theological Review* 2 (May 1859): 321, 318. For more information on *The American Theological Review*, see: Charles H. Lippy, ed., *Religious Periodicals of the United States: Academic and Scholarly Journals* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), xiii.

<sup>16</sup> “ART. X—Schaff’s Church History,” *The American Theological Review* 2 (May 1859): 319.

historians created the idea of historical development without any proof or logic.<sup>17</sup> In regards to Nevin's similar variation, the editor of *The Theological and Literary Journal* called the theory of development a "senseless and revolting figment." He considered the theory of development to be an invented term on which Nevin and Schaff could model their histories because "not a shadow of anything...in the shape of proof is offered by Dr. Nevin or Professor Schaff to verify it."<sup>18</sup> The majority of the criticisms against the theory of development dealt with its real or unreal implications. As a philosophy of history, the theory of development provided an outlet for critics' rage against Schaff's un-American Christianity.

Perhaps the most simplistic reaction against the theory of development came from some critics who believed that having a theory or philosophy of history in and of itself destroyed what it meant to write a good, faithful, and true history. Roswell Hitchcock, a professor at Union Theological Seminary and a contemporary of Schaff, commented, "For my own part, I need no theory of development, I need only the conscience of a Christian man, enlightened by God's Word, to make me feel that if I am planting the weeds, I am responsible for the crop."<sup>19</sup> The argument offered by critics declared that theories become unnecessary when facts compose the entirety of the history, and a theory can muddy those facts. One reviewer stated that Schaff's *History of the Christian Church*

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<sup>17</sup> "Dr. Schaff's Church History," *Christian Watchman and Reflector* 35, no. 12, March 23, 1854, 46.

<sup>18</sup> The Editor, "ART. VI—Dr. Nevin's Pantheistic Development Theories," *The Theological and Literary Journal* 6, no. 1 (1853): 153-1544.

<sup>19</sup> Roswell D. Hitchcock, "Rev. Professor Hitchcock," *New York Observer and Chronicle*, March 10, 1859, 74. Hitchcock's obituary provides some information about his life. See: "Reverend Roswell Dwight Hitchcock, D.D., LL.D.," *New York Evangelist*, June 23, 1887, 4.

“is inconsistent in its arguments; it is extravagant in many of its statements; it gives fancies in the place of facts....”<sup>20</sup> As mentioned earlier, Schaff disregarded the idea of history only being about dispassionate facts and cardboard characters without purpose or meaning.<sup>21</sup>

The *American Quarterly Church Review* argued that “for an honest man, (and such we doubt not Dr. Schaff is,) in writing history will write it, or at least attempt to write it, not make it. He is a scribe, not an author or creator.” Like other German historians including Neander, Schaff wrote with a theory as his foundation, and the resulting problem was that “we are to look, therefore, in Dr. Schaff’s volume not only for facts and dates, but also for Dr. Schaff’s understanding of the ‘ruling ideas and general principles’ of the Church of Christ. Whether Dr. Schaff’s conception of ‘the ruling ideas and general principles’ of the Church is a true conception or not, is of course another and very distinct question from the question of his ‘facts and dates.’”<sup>22</sup> Schaff’s theory tainted the actual history of the church by inserting his own biased understanding of history into the facts. The *New York Evangelist* considered the theory of development “an ineffable absurdity” and, with distain for any history including more than dates and facts, added, “For what, to us, is the past, save only the record of what those have done, who have been here on earth, but are now gone, and no longer existing here?”<sup>23</sup>

Critics also found that Schaff exhibited the typical “vagueness” of German

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<sup>20</sup> “ART. VII—Review of Current Literature: Theology and Church History,” *Christian Examiner* 66, no. 3 (1859): 438.

<sup>21</sup> Schaff, *History of the Apostolic Church*, 3.

<sup>22</sup> “ART. I—Schaff’s History and Mercersburg Theology,” *American Quarterly Church Review and Ecclesiastical Register* 12, no. 3 (October 1859): 375-376.

<sup>23</sup> “Organic Historic Christianity,” *New York Evangelist*, March 9, 1854, 38.

historians, and “the ‘ruling ideas and general principles’ with which Dr. Schaff has written his History, are dreamy, mystical, loosely and even inconsistently defined, are so stated...as that they mean much, a little or nothing.” The reviewer from *The American Quarterly Church Review*, an Episcopalian journal, saw Schaff as adding a layer of complication to history and theology that did not need to be there because history should not have a theory but simply facts. Schaff conceived his theory of development too poorly anyway to be of use to his history.<sup>24</sup>

The editor of *The Theological and Literary Journal* identified the problem with Schaff’s philosophy of history:

Instead of contenting himself with writing *a history* solely of the church, consisting as it has and does of *human beings*, wholly separate in their nature from God, dependent on him for existence, and subject to his providential and moral government,—he has chosen, after the pattern of Neander, and other late writers of that school, to mix with his history *a philosophy* of God, of man, and of the church, in wholly unreal, unnatural, and impossible relations, which contradicts all the great truths of the Christian system and facts of history, and involves him in endless and fatal inconsistencies and self-confutations.<sup>25</sup>

The editor’s criticisms run deeper than the simple concern that theories cloud up the facts. He believed that Schaff’s philosophy of history took precedence over the facts and disrupted what truly happened. He also reasoned that Schaff’s philosophy of history made God’s hand in history equal with human actions. The editor viewed Schaff as creating a work too filled with conflict over its own nature to be of use and condemned it, writing, “A work so unphilosophical [*sic*], so uncritical, so false, and preposterous,

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<sup>24</sup> “ART. I—Schaff’s History and Mercersburg Theology,” *American Quarterly Church Review and Ecclesiastical Register* 12, no. 3 (October 1859): 381, 380.

<sup>25</sup> The Editor, “ART. VI—The History of the Apostolic Church with a General Introduction to Church History,” *The Theological and Literary Journal* 6, no. 4 (April 1854): 670.

whatever powers may elaborate it, cannot be the beau-ideal of a church history; and cannot meet the necessities, and command the acceptance of the evangelical community.”<sup>26</sup>

Schaff applied his theory of development as a structural framework to support the facts, but his use of the theory created cause for concern among these reviewers. The critical understanding that these critics had of history is juvenile and resembles the history from a fourth-grade classroom in some ways. How Schaff presented his histories illustrates how truly modern his thinking was compared to some of his critics. Under this concern of having a history of facts yet without theory, the negative critical reaction reveals how Schaff’s histories caused anger among his critics. The theory of development necessitates theological and historical significance to the institution of the Church throughout history, uses German ideas that were dangerous to evangelicals, and rejects individualism and private judgment. Schaff rejected evangelical Christianity’s Baconian conception of how history should be written, and his critics refused to accept his new, more modern history.

### *Following in Hegel’s Footsteps*

A greater concern to many critics and reviewers came from what they saw as the pantheistic nature of Schaff’s theory of development. Of those who could accept having a philosophy of history, many abhorred the idea that a theory could have any derivation

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<sup>26</sup> The Editor, “ART. VI—The History of the Apostolic Church with a General Introduction to Church History,” *The Theological and Literary Journal* 6, no. 4 (April 1854): 671.

from anything non-Christian or any sort of unorthodox Christianity. As mentioned earlier, Germany provided for America the best and worst of theology for American Christians, and the stricture of having a pantheistic origin for the theory of development placed Schaff's work on the detestable side of German theology. For example, while the editor of *The Theological and Literary Journal* admitted, "Professor Schaff expressly rejects and denounces pantheism as a fatal error of Baur, Strauss, and others," he immediately added, "That, however, is a particular form of pantheism, for the theory of organic development held by a class of Hegelians whom he calls the Tubingen school, and the infidel followers of Hegel. He nowhere rejects the pantheism of Hegel himself, or Schelling."<sup>27</sup> Regardless of the form of pantheism, denouncing the theory of development as pantheistic came as a serious criticism. The criticism shows how dangerous Schaff's reviewers considered his un-American Christianity.

One reviewer from *The Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review* explained that "there is an element of pantheism which underlies this whole theory, and gives it its distinctive character." The "distinctive character" of Schaff's work came with negative connotations. Schaff's references to Schelling and Hegel, both "admitted pantheists," and Schleiermacher, for which there "was ever a matter of doubt on which side of the line he really stood," alone provided enough evidence for his evangelical critics to show the pantheistic nature of the theory of development.<sup>28</sup> A review of a pamphlet that condemned Schaff concluded that his being a faithful and true Protestant "is as

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<sup>27</sup> The Editor, "ART. VI—The History of the Apostolic Church with a General Introduction to Church History," *The Theological and Literary Journal* 6, no. 4 (April 1854): 685.

<sup>28</sup> *The Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review* 26, no. 1 (1854): 167-168.

impossible as it is to suppose that pitch darkness and dazzling light, to the same eyes, reign at the same time in the same places.”<sup>29</sup>

Schleiermacher’s influence on Schaff as seeing Christianity as a way of life “involves a false view of the nature of Christianity, which is the source of far-reaching consequences.” Schaff received criticisms for mixing orthodox Christianity with pantheistic influences. An apt analogy comes from the Garden of Eden in Genesis 3.1-5. The serpent’s lie to the woman mixes truth with in with the lie, which makes for a much more devious lie. The author molds Schaff into the role of the serpent, accusing him of mixing true Christianity with the lies of pantheism. The pantheistic principles “spoil and pervert the whole” of Christianity.<sup>30</sup>

Not all reviewers bothered to veil their criticisms within Biblical allusions. The editor of *The Theological and Literary Journal* declared that Schaff “has no personal God, except as he gratuitously assumes his existence against his own philosophy; he has only the finite material and psychical existences into which he holds that the Absolute has distributed himself.” The criticism did not stop with making God distant and impersonal but made Schaff out to be a panentheist by adding, “But he is not only without a personal God; he is equally without personal men. Mankind, on his theory, are no longer human beings, creatures, individuals, finite entities, distinct from God and one another. Instead, they are converted into God himself; are self-existent; are identical with him to the extent

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<sup>29</sup> *The Theological and Literary Journal* 7, no. 1 (1854): 175.

<sup>30</sup> *The Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review* 26, no. 1 (1854): 171, 157.

of their being, both as entities and as agents....”<sup>31</sup> Much of evangelical Christianity revolves around having a personal God in whom people can put their faith. A Church history preaching otherwise would thus be dangerous to the broad readership that Schaff’s books found, from liberals Arminians to more conservative Calvinists.

While the condemnation of being a pantheist comes off as harsh for a man who was clearly dedicated to Christ, others found harsher criticisms. A Baptist publication, the *Christian Watchman and Reflector* wrote, “This pantheistic theory is strangely elastic, including in the one historic, organic Church, the Catholic, the Protestant, and the Infidel; we think it might also embrace, without violence, the Mahomeddan [*sic*] and the Pagan. It certainly bears little resemblance to the Church of the New Testament, and the incarnation of Deity, which was perfect in the man Christ Jesus, moves not ‘onward’ but backward in its transfer to humanity.” For an evangelical Christian, there is scarcely a worse criticism than denouncing someone as a universalist. If all roads lead to heaven, what purpose is there in Christ? Schaff received the criticism of being a universalist because “as the Hegelian fatalism [Schaff employs] eliminates all evil from the universe, so does Dr. Schaff’s theory *logically* eliminates all evil from the Church.”<sup>32</sup>

A few weeks later, the *Christian Watchman and Reflector* added that “historical development, as an uninterrupted progress from worse to better, is found to be a sheer invention of the historian’s fancy.” The series of articles concluded with a final emphasis on how dangerous Schaff’s pantheistic theory could be: “We beg pardon from our readers

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<sup>31</sup> The Editor, “ART. VI—The History of the Apostolic Church with a General Introduction to Church History,” *The Theological and Literary Journal* 6, no. 4 (April 1854): 689-690.

<sup>32</sup> “Dr. Schaff’s Church History,” *Christian Watchman and Reflector*, March 2, 1854, 34; italics in original.



for exhausting their patience; but the importance of this Church History, and the paramount influence it is destined to attain in shaping the theological mind of America, no less than its direct antagonism to Baptist principles, seemed to demand a thorough exposure of its errors. We think the pantheistic head and the Christian heart of Dr. Schaff have involved him in a ‘striking and irreconcilable contradiction,’ from which neither his rich genius or vast learning or mellow charity can possibly extricate him.”<sup>33</sup>

Schaff’s history had an impact on both academic and non-academic readers, and those who saw him as dangerous made sure that their readers knew about it because Schaff’s histories had implications for eternal matters. The expansive writing on the issue demonstrates the importance of theological issues had for the American religious public and how very different Schaff’s Christianity appeared. The very theological conscience of America was at stake, and not much could be more devastating than a universalist-pantheist cloaked as a Christian.

Orestes Brownson, a prominent Catholic critic, had something to say about the theory of development as well.<sup>34</sup> He considered the theory of development to be without proof—or at least proof to meet his requirements. He asserted that the entire theory of development was built around assumptions “that the human race is in a state of continuous development or progress; that human life is simply evolution; thus

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<sup>33</sup> “Dr. Schaff’s Church History,” *Christian Watchman and Reflector*, March 23, 1854, 46.

<sup>34</sup> It was often directed towards John Henry Newman’s related but still different theory of development; for an extensive article illustrating how Brownson disliked the theory of development, see *Brownson’s Quarterly Review* 6, no. 3 (1852): 303-328. See also Nichols, 107-112 for the differences between Schaff and Newman’s two theories. Interestingly, despite deploring Newman’s variation of the theory of development, Newman still considered appointing Brownson to a chair of a new college in Dublin (“Foreign,” *New York Observer and Chronicle*, May 4, 1854: 139).

confounding first and final causes, or rather, losing sight of proper final causes altogether, which at bottom conceals a purely pantheistic thought.”<sup>35</sup> Because Schaff argues for a hereditary history where the past affects future events, Brownson believed that Schaff looked only to the past and not to the ultimate end of history with Christ’s return.<sup>36</sup> Development within history occurs, for Brownson, only because of where history is going, and any other purpose in history’s direction must be false in means and motive.

Enoch Pond of Bangor Theological Seminary provided a sort of hybrid critique of the theory of development by critiquing both Schaff’s philosophy of history and its pantheistic origins. While no longer considered a scientific history, Schaff wrote his history with that intention.<sup>37</sup> Pond argued that the organic theory of development in history teaches that history should be a science with the same precision as math, which “will enable us as accurately to predict the course of nations, in given circumstances, as we now do the orbits of the heavenly bodies.” Pond, however, feared the day when science would overtake religion, politics, and life itself, and he saw the German idea of history—how Schaff wrote his history—as the impetus behind this terrible change. Pond

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<sup>35</sup> “ART. V—Mercersburg Quarterly Review. Chambersburg, Pa. January, 1854,” *Brownson’s Quarterly Review* 2, no. 2 (1854): 256.

<sup>36</sup> In *History of the Apostolic Church*, Schaff does in fact put a final cause as the source of history, which is the glorification of Christ’s name and renown (Schaff, *History of the Apostolic Church*, 2-3). In *History of the Christian Church* a few years later, Schaff cleared up his belief about the purpose of history: “The central current and ultimate aim of universal history is the KINGDOM OF GOD established by Jesus Christ” (Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, 3).

<sup>37</sup> Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, 22. Schaff held to the idea of divinely guided history, which made him outdated by the end of his life. Yet earlier on, it was considered “*wissenschaftlich*” (scientific). Schaff’s divine scientific history gave way to positivistic scientific history (David W. Lotz, “Philip Schaff and the Idea of Church History,” in *A Century of Church History: The Legacy of Philip Schaff*, edited by Henry W. Bowden [Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1988], 29-30).

viewed scientific history as unbiblical and ultimately inorganic, and adhering to an organic theory of development “is simply to build a castle in the air.” Furthermore, the theory is pantheistic and fatalistic. Its fatalism destroys free will and allows for no distinction between what is sinful and what is holy. While Pond emphasized the purpose of history as being found “in its bearing on the kingdom of Christ,” he gave no conclusive critique of Schaff’s history.<sup>38</sup> Schaff argued for the same purpose of history but with a theory of development.<sup>39</sup> Perhaps Pond would have just preferred no theories at all but “just the facts.”

The fruit of the criticism came from condemnations of Schaff’s theory of development and the accompanying pantheist label. The pantheist label provided his opponents with a convenient term to discredit his studies. The root of his opponents’ criticisms came from their distrustful views of his German influences, German philosophy of history, and rejection of an oftentimes ahistorical Christianity. He advocated for grounded facts that revealed a Church history modeled after his theology, which differed considerably from the consensus of evangelical Christianity.

The arguments generally resided within the pages of academic journals. Discussions over philosophies of history are weighty matters with few repercussions to everyday life. The arguments against Schaff did span across denominations, however. The Baptist *Christian Watchman and Reflector*, the Catholic *Brownson’s Quarterly Review*, the liberal Unitarian *Christian Examiner*, as well as the conservative

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<sup>38</sup> Enoch Pond, “Article II—The Philosophy of History,” *The Christian Review* 98 (October 1, 1859): 529-531, 544.

<sup>39</sup> Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, 3.

Presbyterian *Princeton Review* all condemned Schaff.<sup>40</sup> To the public, arguing over a philosophy of history was less interesting and less sensational than the other constant source of criticisms, which found an even broader base of critics.

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<sup>40</sup> For information on the denominational backgrounds of some of the referenced journals and magazines, see: Thomas A. Tweed, "Christian Examiner," in *Popular Religious Magazines of the United States*, ed. P. Mark Fackler and Charles H. Lippy (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1995), 121-128; Charles H. Lippy, "The Princeton Review," in *Religious Periodicals of the United States: Academic and Scholarly Journals*, ed. Charles H. Lippy (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), 417-421; Steven H. Snyder, "The Index," in *Religious Periodicals of the United States: Academic and Scholarly Journals*, ed. Charles H. Lippy (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), 252; Charles H. Lippy, "Brownson's Quarterly Review," in *Religious Periodicals of the United States: Academic and Scholarly Journals*, ed. Charles H. Lippy (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), 68-75.

## CHAPTER V

## SCHAFF THE PAPIST

Shortly after arriving in America, Schaff witnessed rioting in Philadelphia over the influx of Catholics. Schaff knew firsthand how volatile American emotions were about Catholics.<sup>1</sup> During the 1840s, 1.7 million Catholics entered the country, and the next decade saw 2.6 million more Catholic immigrants. As more Catholics came into the country, more people wrote pamphlets and tracts against the Catholic invasion. Some of these denounced Schaff as sympathetic towards Catholics.<sup>2</sup> American anti-Catholicism also renewed between 1850 and 1854, a time when sectional strife in the America lessened and allowed for a renewed hatred of Catholicism.<sup>3</sup> The period of renewal for Catholic hatred coincided with the release of *History of the Apostolic Church*. Schaff's theory of development took center stage in his Church histories, this time as a pro-Catholic treatise.<sup>4</sup> Discussions concerning philosophies of history took place in a largely

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<sup>1</sup> James Hastings Nichols, *Romanticism in American Theology: Nevin and Schaff at Mercersburg* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), 169.

<sup>2</sup> Stephen R. Graham, *Cosmos in the Chaos: Philip Schaff's Interpretation of Nineteenth-Century American Religion* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 58-59, 62.

<sup>3</sup> Ray Allen Billington, *The Protestant Crusade 1800-1860: A Study of the Origins of American Nativism* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1938), 262.

<sup>4</sup> Newman's theory of development also received harsh criticism: "Never was a more utterly self-destructive theory adopted, than the one in question. Nor had an infidel desired to insinuate an element into the Romish system, by means of which that Communion could be moulded [sic] into any imaginable form to suit the whims and caprices of individuals or generations, and at least reduced to a nullity, could he have insinuated one more efficacious, than this Doctrine of Development. It bears upon itself, and more especially when it is viewed in reference to the Catholic Faith, the mark and

academic setting, but both academic journals and non-academic newspapers condemned Schaff as a Romanist or Papist.

Schaff certainly did not label himself a Papist, but his work did give others the necessary cannon fodder for shooting anti-Catholic invectives at him.<sup>5</sup> The label of Papist, like that of pantheist, represents the fruit of the criticism. The root of the criticism comes in part from his German education and influences. The root also comes from how his Catholic sympathies reflect a theology that differed significantly from the consensus of evangelicalism.

American Protestants had very different ideas about what Catholicism meant as compared to their German counterparts. Indeed, German Evangelicals did not, according to Schaff, abhor the Catholic Church and “identify her with the kingdom of Antichrist.” Just because the Catholic Church could be considered better than Satan’s own church did not mean that Schaff advocated becoming Catholic. Rather, Schaff saw that his more temperate view of the Catholic Church “indicates a new and advanced position of Protestantism itself, which we understand to be the progressive principle of modern church history, whilst Romanizing tendencies are retrograde movements and deadly hostile to a proper conception of progressive development, which underlies all living German theology of the present day, especially its best works on church history.”<sup>6</sup> Thus Schaff did not blindly lash out against the Catholic Church because of his progressive

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brand of Antichrist...” (“ART. IV—The Question of the Papacy,” *The Church Review, and Ecclesiastical Register* 7, no. 3 [October 1854]: 398).

<sup>5</sup> “ART. I—Schaff’s History and Mercersburg Theology,” *American Quarterly Church Review, and Ecclesiastical Register* 12, no. 3 (1859): 379.

<sup>6</sup> Philip Schaff, “ART. VI—German Theology and the Church Question: Translated from ‘Schaff’s Kirchenfreund,’ for September, 1852,” trans. C. Z. Weiser, *Mercersburg Review* 5 (January 1853): 124-125.

understanding of Catholicism. Indeed, Schaff brought Catholicism back into the fold of history because it formed a necessary part of his theory of development and his structural framework for crafting his histories.

Schaff believed that the Church of the Middle Ages existed as “the bearer of true Christianity” and that the Papacy evolved out of necessity for the development of the Church and the emergence of Protestantism. “As the law of Moses was a schoolmaster to Christ,” explained Schaff, “so the new Christian legalism of mediæval Catholicism prepared the way for Evangelical Protestantism.” Even more ammunition for anti-Catholic reviewers came from Schaff’s endorsement of the most hated of the popes: “The proper coryphei of the Papacy, such as Nicholas, Hildebrand, and Innocent III., heretofore regarded as scarcely anything better than incarnate devils, are now looked upon as heroes and benefactors of humanity.” Even the great Neander admired the moral influence of medieval Popes. The crusades, monasticism, scholasticism, mysticism, and other distinctly Catholic conceptions of Christianity also gained favor within Schaff’s histories. These movements pressed forward the organic development of the church towards Protestantism, and thus “this altered conception of the Middle Ages involves an enormous concession to Catholicism, and a fatal blow against a bigoted ultra-Protestantism.” If praising the most corrupt of the popes and admitting concessions to Catholicism were not enough, Schaff laid down his gauntlet against the religious press by arguing that the Catholic Church “cannot possibly, in the nature of the case, be the Antichrist and synagogue of Satan, notwithstanding the many anti-Christian elements which she may have included within her bosom, and of which no age and no denomination is entirely free. That extreme representation, which the majority of our

popular religious papers continue to repeat from week to week, cannot for one moment maintain itself against the results of later Protestant historical research, and must therefore in due time disappear from the consciousness of all educated and unprejudiced minds.”<sup>7</sup> Both the popular religious press and the academic religious press accepted Schaff’s challenge to slay what they saw as Schaff’s marriage with the whore of Babylon.

### *General Reasoning for Anti-Protestantism Criticism*

While generally not as vicious in its attacks on Schaff’s Catholic sympathies as the popular religious press, the academic press was by far the most long-winded. The arguments within the academic journals targeted broad theological concepts and surrounded the arguments with pages of nitpicking over otherwise inconsequential statements from within Schaff’s histories.

J. W. Proudfit’s extensive review of Schaff’s *History of the Apostolic Church* appeared as the first article of the very first issue of *The New Brunswick Review*, a journal in the Dutch Reformed tradition. “I found it hard work,” lamented one editorial on the review, “to wade through 62 pages and 6½ lines of capatiousness [*sic*] and spleen, quibbling and scribbling, grumbling and jumbling, with a little Greek here, a little Hebrew there, and a little French yonder, together with ‘footnotes’ too tedious to mention.”<sup>8</sup> Proudfit dismissed the idea of the theory of development because the union of

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<sup>7</sup> Schaff, “German Theology and the Church Question,” 125-127; Schaff’s reference of the law as schoolmaster is from Galatians 3.24-25.

<sup>8</sup> B, “Dr. Proudfit and Dr. Schaff’s Church History,” *German Reformed Messenger*, June 21, 1854, 4111.



Protestantism and Catholicism in a higher state clearly showed Schaff was a Papist. Proudfit's lengthy criticisms emanated from the belief that all theology within a history can be derived only from the Bible and that a history of Christianity must use primary sources. Schaff, argued Proudfit, misused and misunderstood the primary sources from late antiquity. Schaff, as noted before, rejected the evangelical conception of *sola scriptura* and private judgment in favor of theology grounded in the Bible but informed by history, which set him apart from the evangelical consensus.<sup>9</sup>

*The Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review* differentiated Schaff's theory of development from John Henry Newman's theory, noting that many reviewers mixed up the two despite the latter being much more ruinous towards Protestantism. Schaff's road towards Catholicism came from departing from the Protestant concept of the completeness of doctrine within the New Testament church and allowing orthodoxy to be different at different times. Schaff's sympathies towards Catholicism did not alone come from his allowance of incomplete doctrine in the first century. Schaff became a Romanist because he viewed the Church as a supernatural entity and the continuation of Christ's incarnation. Interestingly, the review did not condemn Schaff's belief in the Church being "*aufgehoben* [lifted] into to something better than" Catholicism or Protestantism in the future, unlike Proudfit.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> J. W. Proudfit, "ART. I—Dr. Schaff's Works on Church History," *The New Brunswick Review* 1, no. 1 (May 1854): 17-18, 23.

<sup>10</sup> *The Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review* 26, no. 1 (January 1854): 168, 181-182, 186. Newman's more sinister theory of development argued that the Bible revealed some truth, but the church reveals all truth. "Thus from the simple religion of the New Testament, has the vast system the Romish theology and hierarch been gradually evolved, by a natural process of divinely guided development. Out of the simple direction

A review of *History of the Christian Church* from the *American Quarterly Church Review* found Schaff's sympathies towards Rome emanating from his allowance for doctrinal change outside of the apostolic period. Churches go astray—like the entire Roman Catholic Church—when they appeal to anything other than the New Testament and fail “to accept the Church as Christ planted it, and the simple Facts of the Gospel as they are revealed. System-making, Church-wise, and Doctrine-wise, has been the sin and the curse of the Church in all ages from the very first.”<sup>11</sup> The reviewer's negative comments reflect Schaff's adverse attitude towards private judgment and *Sola Scriptura* without consideration of the entire history of the Church.

One fifty-three-page article from *The Theological and Literary Journal* best summarized the negative views of the Mercersburg Theology's sympathies by declaring that Schaff and Nevin “favor the doctrines of Romanism.”<sup>12</sup> A similarly condemning article came from the editor the following issue, which reemphasized that the theory of development is not based on scripture and that scripture and doctrines are timeless and not subject to the whims of the ages. Because the reviewer believed that Schaff and Nevin sanctioned the idea of letting individuals determine doctrine, the reviewer consequently thought that they sanctioned heresies of the Catholic Church.<sup>13</sup>

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to anoint the sick with oil, has grown the sacrament of extreme unction” (*The Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review* 26, no. 1 [January 1854]: 165-166).

<sup>11</sup> “ART. I—Schaff's History and Mercersburg Theology,” *American Quarterly Church Review and Ecclesiastical Register* 12, no. 3 (October 1859): 377-378.

<sup>12</sup> The Editor, “ART. IV—The Views of Dr. Nevin and His Party of the German Reformed Communion Respecting the Doctrines and Worship of the Roman Catholic Church 1853,” *The Theological and Literary Journal* 5, no. 4 (April 1853): 673.

<sup>13</sup> The Editor, “ART. VI—Dr. Nevin's Pantheistic Development Theories,” *The Theological and Literary Journal* 6, no. 1 (July 1853): 155-156, 161.

While academic articles spanned many, many pages, non-academic articles compressed all of the fury and anger over Schaff's Catholic sympathies into manageable articles. Some of the articles targeted Schaff's doctrines while a few targeted his philosophy of history. The overarching theory of development that holds Schaff's works together, as with the academic articles, provided the ammunition for criticizing Schaff's Catholic sympathies.

An article within the *New York Evangelist* found Schaff's work respectable and somewhat useful, "yet it is suffused through and through with such gross error; ventures, in its lively speculations, upon grounds so repugnant to the foundation-principles of Protestantism and the Word of God, and withal, is so seductive in its influence, that we have left us no honest alternative but to expose its mischief, and to set forth, in some degree, its radical antagonism to Scripture and reason."<sup>14</sup> Most of the strictures within the article deal with soteriological issues. The basis of the soteriological criticisms stemmed from how the writer saw Schaff's history as promoting the Catholic Church through the debasement of Scripture because of the theory of development.

*The Independent* offered similar criticisms for Schaff's support of Catholicism through his theory of development. Without Bibliocentric and Christocentric foci in the church, Christianity cannot exist. Making Rome a valid church for any time within history would invalidate the entire Church, and "a better scheme never was concocted for educating a generation of Voltaires, than such a scheme of Church history."<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> "Dr. Schaff's Church History," *The New York Evangelist*, February 16, 1854, 26.

<sup>15</sup> C., "Dr. Schaff's Apology for the Papacy," *The Independent*, April 13, 1854, 1.

The *New York Observer* delighted itself with extensive criticisms of Schaff, and remarked, “From no quarter have we had any other than the warmest approbation. We make these remarks because we do not approve of much that is in Schaff’s book; but we would not assail the worst book with unfair criticism, and we would blush to attribute to the most heretical author sentiments which he repudiates.” Everyone approved of the criticisms, according to the paper, and “no one, not even the conceited twaddler who *weakly* wags his good quill in the Dutch paper, has ventured to raise the shade of a question against those strictures that are eminently just.”<sup>16</sup> *The New York Observer* considered the theory of development as a theory leading to Rome and concluded, “We are therefore willing to lend what aid we can to the good work of exposing this dangerous error, and of applying as far as possible the desired corrective.”<sup>17</sup>

Both academic and non-academic sources criticized Schaff’s philosophy of history and the theory of development for its supposed Catholic sympathies that emerged from the theory of development. One critic considered that “the theory of Development seems to be invented especially for the defense of Rome.”<sup>18</sup> Because of the theory of development, Proudfit explained that *History of the Apostolic Church* was “a historical plea for the papacy. Thither his ‘sources’ and ‘divisions,’ his theories, criticisms, ‘legends,’ and *vaticinations* [*sic*] plainly tend.”<sup>19</sup> Even when all else could be praised, such as orthodoxy of belief or Schaff’s high view of Scripture, Schaff still received

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<sup>16</sup> “Schaff and the Critics,” *The New York Observer and Chronicle*, July 13, 1854, 218; italics in original.

<sup>17</sup> “Dr. Schaff’s Reviewers,” *The New York Observer and Chronicle*, August 17, 1854, 258.

<sup>18</sup> “Dr. Schaff’s Church History,” *Christian Watchman and Reflector*, March 23, 1854, 46.

<sup>19</sup> Proudfit, 23; italics in original.

strictures for his views on Catholicism.<sup>20</sup> One brief review from *The Christian Watchman and Reflector*, for example, commented that “we have noted but a single depart from the common Orthodox theory. He doubts the canonical authority of the book of Hebrews, attributing it to Apollos instead of Paul.”<sup>21</sup> At the end of the review, the author reveals what is far more troubling but leaves the conclusion for the following issue: “we shall reserve for our next paper a careful examination of the fatal error, into which we think our author has fallen, in his favorite theory of *Development*, by which the Church of Rome, with its frightful corruptions of doctrine and life, is made the only Christian church existing through the long night of the Middle Ages.”<sup>22</sup>

Some of Schaff’s critics saw him on a road to Rome in part because Schaff had more concern with certain doctrines and not others: “Dr. Schaff goes so far as to specify the Trinity, the true Divinity and humanity of Christ, and the inspiration and divine authority of the Bible, as constituting *all* the fundamental doctrines of Christianity; at least this is the logical tenor of his words.” Schaff left out, in the reviewer’s opinion,

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<sup>20</sup> As a Catholic, Brownson took a very different critical stand against Schaff’s view of Catholicism. Brownson argued that Protestantism did not develop out of Catholicism but ruptured with it: “Take the sacramental principle. Has Protestantism developed and continued that? Everybody knows that it began by denying five Sacraments out of seven, mutilated the two it professed to retain, and obscured, if it did not expressly deny, the sacramental principle itself. Here, if anything, it was a rupture with the old Church, not its development or continuation. So of penitential works, indulgences, purgatory, prayers for the dead, invocation of the saints, the worship of Mary, &c” (“ART. V—Mercersburg Quarterly Review. Chambersburg, Pa. January, 1854,” *Brownson’s Quarterly Review* 2, no. 2 [April 1854]: 258-259).

<sup>21</sup> “Schaff’s Church History,” *Christian Watchman and Reflector*, February 23, 1854, 30. Most scholars currently do not consider Paul the author of the book of Hebrews, and Apollos is still mentioned as a candidate occasionally. Schaff was ahead of his time in this regard. No one knows with certainty, however, who wrote Hebrews.

<sup>22</sup> “Schaff’s Church History,” *Christian Watchman and Reflector*, February 23, 1854, 30.

“atonement, the doctrine of regeneration, the doctrine of justification by faith, and other great truths.”<sup>23</sup> Because Schaff places less emphasis on important Protestant doctrines like justification and atonement, critics branded him as anti-Protestant. While Schaff’s emphases as understood by the reviewer were not specifically doctrines that set him apart as a Catholic, skipping out on the Reformation’s principles made him a target for being a Catholic. Branding Schaff as a papist, however, is a superficial label on the deeper concerns that Schaff was rejecting the foundations of evangelical Christianity.

Anti-development critics also argued that the foundation of Christian principles cannot be changed or modified, especially when the change comes from sources external to the Church. Evangelicals saw many of the supposed developments arising from paganism, and the heretical doctrines of the Church during late antiquity “constitute the chief peculiarities of the Papal system.”<sup>24</sup> Late Antiquity through the Middle Ages saw heresies introduced into the Roman Catholic Church through paganism, and Schaff’s critics did not view these changes as developments. Furthermore, the use of history in defending the changes to the church was considered “an ineffable degradation and disgrace of Christianity.” The defense of the Papacy and Rome was unbiblical, and to accept any of the abominations from the Catholic Church would be “an infatuated perversion for a Church historian deliberately to argue.”<sup>25</sup> Thus reviewers argued that the implications of Schaff’s theory of development meant that he sought to both legitimize

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<sup>23</sup> C., “Dr. Schaff’s Apology for the Papacy,” *The Independent*, April 13, 1854, 1; italics in original.

<sup>24</sup> The Editor, “ART. VI—Dr. Nevin’s Pantheistic Development Theories,” *The Theological and Literary Journal* 6, no. 1 (1853): 157, 159.

<sup>25</sup> “Organic Historic Christianity,” *New York Evangelist*, March 9, 1854, 38.

the Papacy and condone or even legitimize the various sins and heresies of the Church throughout the ages—especially the Roman Catholic Church of the Middle Ages.

*Legitimizing the Papacy, the Iniquities of the Church, and Rome*

The arguments about Schaff's anti-Protestant theology rested upon Schaff's assertion that the Roman Catholic Church existed as the legitimate successor in the line of churches from the Pentecost to Protestantism. Because Schaff does, in fact, see the Roman Catholic Church as legitimate, the response from one critic was that "Dr. Schaff argues that the Papacy, *whatever be its corruptions*, must be accepted as without question the true Church of Christ, because otherwise we have no manifestation of Christ and his Church in history." Schaff does admit the moral failures of the Papacy and the Roman Catholic Church, but his critics still wondered at his scandalous support for the Roman Catholic Church nevertheless.<sup>26</sup>

Accepting the Papacy was problematic for many reasons. For one, it created a division between the apostolic era and the rest of Christian history. Christ established the church of Kingdom of Heaven forever, not just for seventy years. Perversion, and not any sort of development, stood at the center of the creation of the Papacy.<sup>27</sup> Because Christ manifested his kingdom on earth through the Church and because Schaff viewed the Church as the vehicle for how Christ's life flows down from heaven, the Papacy as a legitimate entity becomes even more problematic. How can Christ's own lifeline to earth

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<sup>26</sup> C., "Dr. Schaff's Apology for the Papacy," *The Independent*, April 13, 1854, 1.

<sup>27</sup> "ART. I—Schaff's History and Mercersburg Theology," *American Quarterly Church Review, and Ecclesiastical Register* 12, no. 3 (October 1859): 379-380.

apostatize? A critic from the *Christian Watchman and Reflector* replied, “As nature is the body of the universe, so the church is the body of Christianity, ‘an unbroken continuance of Christ’s incarnation.’ As the Hegelian fatalism eliminates all evil from the universe, so does Dr. Schaff’s theory *logically* eliminate all evil from the Church.”<sup>28</sup> Yet clearly evil existed in the Church, especially during the Middle Ages. Another critic similarly commented, “According to his theory, no such idolatrous, profligate, and bloody power as the Babylon of the Apocalypse [the Roman Catholic Church] ever has or ever can arise in the Church. The representations of that, and the parallel prophecies of the Bible, are in effect set aside as mistaken or misunderstood.”<sup>29</sup> The sarcasm is clear in the response; evil continued—and continues—in the Church.

Some confused Schaff’s acceptance of the Papacy as love for the Holy See. In a letter sent back to the *German Reformed Messenger* while abroad, Schaff commented that Scots had no appreciation for anything good within the Catholic Church, and only a few historically minded persons understood differently.<sup>30</sup> One writer took the statement to mean that Schaff admired “the great and beautiful” Pope and snidely continued, “Does he mean the great and beautiful Pope, stuck up in his scarlet vatican [*sic*], branding his

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<sup>28</sup> “Dr. Schaff’s Church History,” *Christian Watchman and Reflector*, March 2, 1854, 34.

<sup>29</sup> The Editor, “ART. VI—The History of the Apostolic Church with a General Introduction to Church History,” *The Theological and Literary Journal* 6, no. 4 (April 1854): 699.

<sup>30</sup> Philip Schaff, “Letters from Rev. Dr. Schaff: Ten Days in Scotland,” *German Reformed Messenger*, August 16, 1854, 4143. Schaff, in the same article, also commented that despite their good model of morality, Scots did have issues: “To these [issues] belong especially, the vast amount of intemperance that prevails. Comparatively speaking, no where is there as much whiskey and brandy consumed, as in Scotland with all its strict religious and earnest character.” It is a wonder he did not make a connection between the anti-Papal movements and intemperance!



inflated brows with the titles of blasphemy, while grasping at the prerogatives of the Deity? Does he mean the great and beautiful masses, sculls, and crosses, saints and sacraments, and all other corrupt doctrines and wild formalities of this unhallowed mother of Romish tyrants? Does he mean the great and beautiful deeds of which popery has been the origin—which have disgraced the human race, and stained the pages that record them in history?” The writer continued the rant for several more lines and ultimately concluded that Schaff was a heretic who was dangerous to American liberty because of his love for the Pope.<sup>31</sup> Clearly the popular religious press considered the issue to be important. That a letter of little theological consequence caused such concern from at least one individual shows how readily the public involved itself within the religious debates of the era. It also underscores that while fruit of Schaff’s work—his appreciation of Catholic history—received the negative remarks, the root of his work—his un-American Christianity—remained the foundation of the criticisms.

A review of a pamphlet condemning Schaff explained that “the theory of development advanced by Professor Schaff in his Essay several years since on Protestantism, and the lavish commendations he bestowed in it on the Catholic church of the middle ages, indicate that he was then in fact a philosophic [*sic*] Papist, and that some of the worst features of that apostate power were the objects of his enthusiastic admiration.”<sup>32</sup> Any hint of appreciation for Catholicism or the Pope automatically resulted in criticisms of Schaff being a Papist from both the academic and non-academic presses.

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<sup>31</sup> W. F., “Great and Beautiful Catholicism...” *Christian Observer*, September 2, 1854, 138.

<sup>32</sup> *The Theological and Literary Journal* 7, no. 1 (July 1854): 174-175.

Any reasonable historian or theologian cannot deny that the church and the Papacy committed many sins. Banning the reading of the Bible and excommunication for preaching the Gospel were some of the worst sins that Schaff was willing to legitimize for the sake of his theory of development, according to the critics.<sup>33</sup> Because Schaff considered the Roman Catholic Church to be legitimate, also “the false doctrines, the superstitious rites, the idolatrous worship, and the impious usurpations of the Papacy, are legitimate and essential elements of the Christian system, and obligatory on the Protestant as well as the Catholic church [*sic*].”<sup>34</sup> Critics saw Schaff as approving of everything non-Biblical, pantheistic, and superstitious within the Catholic tradition. Critics assumed he was rejecting the consensus of evangelical Christianity in America, which is the reason behind the harsh criticisms as a papist.

Reviewers also assumed that the theory of development made it necessary to accept evil within the true church. A critic from the *New York Evangelist* declared, “Idolatries, blasphemies, iniquities, despotisms, forms, corporations, and practices of pure, sheer, unmingled simony, pride, worldly ambition, and covetousness, are accepted as the kingdom of Jesus Christ, the true Christian Church, simply because this development fills nearly all the history for ages, and because to reject it, would, in the view of this writer, destroy the possibility of an historical Christianity.”<sup>35</sup> Reviewers considered that Schaff not only approved of the Church’s sins and the Papacy but also that those sins were essential to Schaff’s philosophy of history. According to how

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<sup>33</sup> C., “Dr. Schaff’s Apology for the Papacy,” *The Independent*, April 13, 1854, 1.

<sup>34</sup> The Editor, “ART. VI—Dr. Nevin’s Pantheistic Development Theories,” *The Theological and Literary Journal* 6, no. 1 (1853): 154.

<sup>35</sup> “Dr. Schaff’s Church History,” *New York Evangelist*, February 16, 1854, 26.

Schaff's opponents read his works, the sins of the Church and the Papacy also had their origins in the primitive church, which was also troubling to critics who viewed the apostolic era of the church to be its high-water mark—at least until Christ returns.<sup>36</sup>

A critic from *The Independent* ably summed up his outrage: “To make it appear that the Church of Christ is in history, according to his [Schaff's] speculations in regard to its organic historical existence, he covers up the wickedness of the Papacy, apologizes for the ineffable iniquities of the Popes, and accepts that which sits in the temple of God, usurping the place of God, as the organic development of the body of Christ, a part and parcel of true Christianity.”<sup>37</sup> The Pope, as the central figure and high priest of the synagogue of Satan, could be worthy of nothing but eternal punishment in hell for Schaff's anti-Catholic critics. Any other view could not have been considered to be true Christianity.

Some critics attacked Schaff for his views on the primacy of Peter and the Church Fathers. If the concerns for being a Papist come from minor remarks, criticisms for his comments on Peter and the Church Fathers come from statements in many cases that readers would have otherwise passed over. Even these sorts of esoteric issues concerned Christians of all sorts in America. Superficially, because of the populist nature of American Christianity, its anti-Catholicism, and Schaff's Catholic sympathies, he received several strictures on these topics. Again, these criticisms represent attacks on the fruit. The ahistorical character of American evangelical Protestantism rejected Schaff's

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<sup>36</sup> The Editor, “ART. VI—The History of the Apostolic Church with a General Introduction to Church History,” *The Theological and Literary Journal* 6, no. 4 (April 1854): 696.

<sup>37</sup> C., “Dr. Schaff's Apology for the Papacy,” *The Independent*, April 13, 1854, 1.

European theological and historical outlook. Schaff also attacked the unifying foundations of evangelicalism, which led to criticisms across a range of very different denominations.

Schaff, as one critic pointed out, admitted that Peter had many failures. Since Peter was so severely flawed, the critic demanded to know how Peter's successors could be any better. Yet, according to the author, Schaff both accepted the popes as well as considered that Peter was the first pope.<sup>38</sup> The *Christian Examiner* found Schaff to be too uncritical of all the apostles in general and criticized his "loose reasoning" and "arbitrary and unwarranted" assertions of the apostles' characters.<sup>39</sup>

The majority of Proudfit's long article condemned Schaff's view of the primacy of Peter and ultimately concluded, "This first volume of Dr. Schaff's History is an attempt to *force* the growth of the whole papacy in the Apostolic age."<sup>40</sup> Proudfit's conclusion seems laughable now as *History of the Apostolic Church* clearly has more to it than proving the legitimacy of the Papacy. One reviewer of Proudfit, while lauding the condemnation of Schaff, commented, "We commend the patience and heroism of Professor Proudfit, but we can't help feeling some pity for the nice paper, types and ink, which seem to be wasted in this warfare as so much gunpowder and wadding."<sup>41</sup> Perhaps this area of criticism tired some readers, yet the existence of such articles only reinforces how theological issues concerned much of the religious public.

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<sup>38</sup> C., "Dr. Schaff's Apology for the Papacy," *The Independent*, April 13, 1854, 1. See also Proudfit, 23-63. Schaff did not, however, accept Peter as the first pope.

<sup>39</sup> ART. VII.—Review of Current Literature: Theology and Church History," *Christian Examiner* 66, no. 3 (May 1859): 440-441.

<sup>40</sup> Proudfit, 62; italics in original.

<sup>41</sup> B., "Dr. Proudfit and Dr. Schaff's Church History," *German Reformed Messenger*, June 21, 1854, 4111.

A few authors scoffed at the idea of the early Church Fathers not being Protestants and adhering to Catholic ideas like purgatory. “The Mercersburg Review,” lamented one critic, “which has gained a prominence before the eye of the religious public, that makes its *dicta* like the beacons of a city set upon a hill, has determined that the Fathers (Samuel-like) shall be bewitched from their comfortable repose, and again hear the clarion of war.” The critic thought that the *Mercersburg Review* found “Early Christian Antiquity reeking with the fumes of Popery.” The critic admitted some inconsistency with early Church Fathers’ doctrines, but he ultimately concluded that the Church Fathers are in general orthodox, good for Protestants, and most definitely not Catholic.<sup>42</sup>

In close connection with controversies over legitimizing the Papacy, the sins of the Church, and the position of Peter and the Church Fathers in history, critics attacked Schaff over his position that the Roman Catholic Church was a true and legitimate church during the Middle Ages. Criticisms of the validity of the Catholic Church concerned both academic and non-academic critics.

Schaff considered a visible, manifest Church essential for understanding Christ’s kingdom of heaven on earth, but the divisions within the Church concerned some reviewers. If the theory of development requires a visible church, as noted above, Schaff would have to accept the apostasy of Rome as being necessary for development—at least according to his critics. Since the Protestant churches are fragmented and full of sectarianism and rationalism, how is Protestantism any better in the scheme of

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<sup>42</sup> “Value of the Christian Fathers,” *The Church Review, and Ecclesiastical Register* 4, no. 4 (January 1852): 500, 498, 517, 521; see also: “Dr. Schaff’s Church History,” *Christian Watchman and Reflector*, March 23, 1854, 46.

progress?<sup>43</sup> The editor of *The Theological and Literary Journal* answered, “Not withstanding the recognition of the Scriptures as the Word of God, he neglects, warps, or sets them aside just in proportion as he adheres to his theory that Christianity is a progressive and perpetually developing system of doctrines, rites, worship, and acts; and that the faith, homage, and practice of the church at each period, is a true exponent of genuine Christianity at that period.” Consequently, Schaff justified Rome and vilified Protestant doctrine, which made Rome legitimate, “*the Christian Church*,” and Protestantism illegitimate.<sup>44</sup> The *New York Evangelist* also denounced Schaff as a historian for his support of Rome: “His claims as a scientific historian are very much lessened by every instance of such special pleading; and indeed, in the defense of the Papacy and the Papal Church, as being the true Church of Christ, with his labored apologies for the admitted blackness and deformity of the Papal Church in the historical record, and his objurgations [*sic*] against Protestantism for being antagonistic against the Papacy, he shows himself a partisan, rather than a historian.”<sup>45</sup> Defending Rome in any form destroyed for these reviewers any sense of credibility for Schaff as a historian or a Protestant.

J. J. Janeway, a “pastor of the Reformed Dutch church, and Vice-President of Rutgers College,” presented some of the longest and most analytical refutations of Schaff’s Catholic sympathies. A notice of Janeway’s death regarded that while “his easy

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<sup>43</sup> “Dr. Schaff’s Church History,” *Christian Watchman and Reflector*, March 23, 1854, 46.

<sup>44</sup> The Editor, “ART. VI—The History of the Apostolic Church with a General Introduction to Church History.” *The Theological and Literary Journal* 6, no. 4 (April 1854): 695, 697; italics in original.

<sup>45</sup> “Dr. Schaff’s Theory of Church History,” *New York Evangelist*, February 23, 1854, 30.

and perspicuous style made his writings acceptable to the religious public,” he held firm in his orthodox theology and engaged in controversy in a way “that his opponents were soothed by his suavity, and thus were saved the usual fate of controversialists.”<sup>46</sup> Prior to 1846, Janeway had actually been a supporter of the Mercersburg Theological Seminary. He had donated twenty dollars to the Diognothian Literary Society at Mercersburg and, ironically, drafted fifty dollars from his bank that was put towards Schaff’s salary. After conversations and letters with G. Dering Wolff, one of Schaff’s supporters who had come to Janeway for money for the seminary, and reading *The Principle of Protestantism*, Janeway wrote to the students who were seeking aid to let them know that they were “under the conduct of bad leaders” and afterwards “terminated all correspondence with Mercersburg.”<sup>47</sup>

Janeway first wrote *A Contrast Between the Erroneous Assertions of Professor Schaff and the Testimony of Credible Historians in Regard to the State of the Christian Church*, a thirty-seven-page pamphlet, in 1852. *The Presbyterian Magazine* reviewed the pamphlet that year and wrote,

Dr. Schaff, in one of his publications, took occasion to laud the Church of the middle ages, its religious spirit, political influence, magnificent cathedrals, rich paintings, lofty music, theological and poetic literature, &c. Dr. Janeway, having no faith in external pomp, popish ceremonials, church vanities, and doctrinal heresies, brings the Professor up to the bar of history, and makes him listen to an array of testimony, which, if he that

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<sup>46</sup> “The Late Dr. Janeway,” *The New York Observer and Chronicle*, July 8, 1858, 211; “Death of Rev. Dr. Janeway,” *German Reformed Messenger*, July 14, 1858, 2. Neither of the death notices mention Schaff or Janeway’s controversies with Schaff, but *The New York Observer and Chronicle* did mistakenly print, “The piety of Dr. S was his crowning glory.” Perhaps the writer of the obituary was thinking of Schaff.

<sup>47</sup> J. J. Janeway, *Antidote to the Poison of Popery, in the Writings and Conduct of Professors Nevin & Schaff, Professors in the German Reformed Church, in the U. S. of America* (New Brunswick, NJ: Press of J. Terhune, 1856), lxi.

hath ears hears, must sound not like a ‘contrast,’ but like awful truth. Dr. Janeway has hit upon a good expedient to enlighten the public mind, and produced a publication worthy of his Protestant spirit and evangelical character.<sup>48</sup>

Janeway sent his work to Wolff and others within the German Reformed Church, apparently unsuccessfully. While in New York in 1853, Janeway met with someone who mentioned Schaff’s *History of the Apostolic Church*. He purchased the book on a Monday, and “on Tuesday, while examining the work, the publisher of the ‘Historical Commentaries of the state of Christianity during the first three hundred and twenty-five years from the Christian era, by Mosheim,’ came into my study, and offered it for sale. Coming, as it did, just at the time Dr. Schaf’s [sic] history made its appearance, I could not hesitate to purchase it.”<sup>49</sup>

Janeway, with Mosheim in one hand and Schaff in the other, thus expanded his *Contrast* and released the expanded version, *Antidote to the Poison of Popery*, in 1856. Janeway devoted the first part to quotations from other historians to show that Schaff misunderstood the history of the Church during the Middle Ages. The second part, “Antidote, &c.,” deals with exposing Schaff’s “FAVOR OF THE PAPACY.”<sup>50</sup> A reviewer from *The Theological and Literary Journal* remarked about *Antidote to the Poison of Popery* that “it is a candid, bold, and uncompromising exposure of the false doctrines of Professors Nevin and Schaff, and rebuke of their artful and treacherous procedure; and will open the eyes of many, we trust, to the errors and deceits of those

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<sup>48</sup> Review of *A Contrast Between the Erroneous Assertions of Professor Schaff and the Testimony of Credible Ecclesiastical Historians in Regard to the State of the Christian Church in the Middle Ages*, by J. J. Janeway, *The Presbyterian Magazine*, vol. 2, 1852, 523.

<sup>49</sup> Janeway, *Antidote*, lxii-lxiii.

<sup>50</sup> Janeway, *Antidote*, 65.



Romanizing teachers.”<sup>51</sup> Schaff’s delightful style, also, received no love from Janeway, who wrote, “The culling flowers of rhetoric, beauties of style and sentiment, to be found in his history, I leave to others. My aim is at a more important object. I wish to guard such against a fatal sting that may be concealed in those flowers; and to beware, lest while they admire beauties of style, or even beauties of sentiment, they drink in the *poison of Popery*.”<sup>52</sup>

Janeway repeated most of the above-mentioned criticisms of Schaff in *Antidote to the Poison of Popery*. The majority of his work centered on condemning Schaff’s position on the validity of the Roman Catholic Church and the validity of Peter as the first Pope. Janeway spends over twenty-five pages reiterating all of Peter’s faults in the New Testament. He rather grudgingly admitted that even Schaff did not argue for a continuous Papal line from Peter through the first six centuries of the church.<sup>53</sup> But because Schaff did argue for the preeminence of Peter in the early church and did assert that the Church ascribed to itself a line of succession beginning with Peter, Janeway repeatedly accused Schaff of being a papist.

Schaff’s appreciation of the Roman Catholic Church for providing stability and orthodoxy during the Middle Ages also came under fire. Janeway faulted Schaff for believing that the Popes endorsed and defended marriage as well as the separation of the Church from worldly politics. One of the worst criticisms Janeway presented against Schaff is that he opposed the great reformers, Luther, Melancthon, Zwingli, and Calvin.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> *The Theological and Literary Journal* 9, no. 1 (July 1856): 176.

<sup>52</sup> Janeway, *Antidote*, 65.

<sup>53</sup> Janeway, *Antidote*, 102.

<sup>54</sup> Janeway, *Antidote*, 126-127, 130, 133.

Janeway's criticisms seem endless in his *Antidote to the Poison of Popery*, and indeed over 300 pages of negativity does grow wearisome when the work is as repetitive as it is.<sup>55</sup> Considering the strictures, Janeway's work represents the climax of Schaff's criticisms.<sup>56</sup> Janeway presents the longest and most critical view of Schaff's works. Most of Schaff's critics at least found Schaff's style to be enjoyable, but Janeway even detested Schaff's histories for being delightful reading. While Janeway focused largely on Schaff's Catholic sympathies, other areas of eternal concern from Schaff's works also found condemnations.

#### *Soteriological Concerns*

Schaff's Catholic sympathies certainly garnered a significant amount of criticism. Another area of criticism in his work concerned the implications of the theory of development on his soteriological convictions. Schaff's concern over salvation crossed several issues, including the necessity of the visible church in salvation, baptism, and the sacraments.

The claims of Schaff being a pantheist or a Papist were in most cases ridiculous and came from intensely negative articles concerned about minor issues within the histories. These nitpicky arguments flowed from the underlying concerns about how

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<sup>55</sup> Janeway died before the release of *History of the Christian Church*. Had he lived long enough to condemn it, one can only wonder how many more pages it would have been.

<sup>56</sup> Stephen R. Graham, *Cosmos in the Chaos: Philip Schaff's Interpretation of Nineteenth-Century American Religion* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 62.

Schaff's historical Christianity did not meld well with the consensus of evangelical Christianity. Arguments over salvation tended to be much more muddled than conflict over Schaff's supposed pantheistic leanings or Catholic sympathies. Schaff himself created much of the confusion for seeming to be to his readers Protestant one moment and Catholic the next: "We are thrilled at times by grand thoughts which sound like a trumpet blast from Luther's Wartburg cells; we are confounded on the next page by sentiments taken apparently from Cardinal Wiseman or Dr. Brownson."<sup>57</sup> Additionally, theologies of salvation vary from sect to sect and person to person. Rather than the nearly universal condemnation of anything remotely Catholic or the general skepticism towards German pantheistic theology, soteriological concerns had their foundations in core denominational theologies that differed between the sects. Atonement alone, for example, has multiple variations from the very conservative penal substitutionary atonement to the very liberal moral influence view of atonement.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> "Dr. Schaff's Church History," *Christian Watchman and Reflector*, March 23, 1854, 46.

<sup>58</sup> Views of atonement, for example, generally break into four different categories: *Christus victor*, penal substitution, government, and moral influence. The former two are typically conservative bastions. The *Christus victor* view of atonement shows how Christ defeated sin and death and in that victory sinners were granted access to God. The penal substitution view of atonement argues that Jesus took upon himself sin while on the cross, paying all the debt owed to God for that sin, and imputing to sinners Christ's own righteousness. These views of atonement are Christocentric and give man no agency in redemption. The governmental view of atonement shows that a penalty must be paid when God's law is broken, but this view of Christ's sacrifice is not concerned with individual sins and does not view righteousness as being imputed. The moral influence view of atonement simply has Christ setting the perfect example and giving man a model by which to live and love God. In contrast to the first two view of atonement, the governmental and moral influence views of atonement are more anthropocentric and place agency in redemption with man and Christ. See: Mark A. Noll, *America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (Oxford University Press, 2002), 267; see also Mark Driscoll and Gerry Breshears, *Death by Love: Letters from the Cross*

For all parties involved in the debates about salvation, the Bible was at the center of the discussion. *The Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review*, a conservative Presbyterian journal, affirmed that American Protestant theologians considered doctrine unclear and unformed without the use of the Bible. As a clarification, it added that “the Church is always equally near to Christ and to the holy Scriptures as the source of life. It does not derive its resources mediately [*sic*] through those who have gone before, but directly from the Lord.”<sup>59</sup> Critics of Schaff agreed that there should be no mediator between God and man except Jesus and that the revelation of this relationship comes entirely from the Bible.

For Schaff, the Church and Christianity are one and the same, but having the Church and Christianity opposite sides of the same coin provoked critics who thought it possible for Christianity to exist outside of a physical church. He believed that the essence of Christianity, those who have been redeemed, cannot exist outside of the kingdom of heaven, which is the Church.<sup>60</sup> Christ continues his work through the Church. One critic thus asked if Christ continues his work in Syrian, Oriental, Armenian, Nestorian, and Maronite churches. “But besides,” continued the reviewer, “are there no Christians who have never been baptized at all? If an earnest believer, who finds no sufficient warrant for infant baptism, does nevertheless ‘bring up his children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord,’ with many prayers, as well as with diligent teaching,

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(Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2008), 31-52; for strictly textbook definitions of the variations of atonement, see Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 578-582.

<sup>59</sup> *The Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review* 26, no. 1 (January 1854): 160, 163.

<sup>60</sup> “ART. I—Schaff’s Apostolic History,” *The Christian Review* 20, no 79 (1855): 9-10.

is not his a Christian household? Are his children any less Christians than those of some ungodly Englishman, whose children have been regularly ‘christened’ by the fox-hunting vicar of the parish?”<sup>61</sup> Because of Schaff’s connection between the Church and Christianity, the *New York Evangelist* described his work “as a history of *Churchianity* rather than of Christianity. In its influence, it is, we fear, adapted to make men worshipers of the Church rather than of Christ; and in whatever degree this tendency is to be found, it is greatly to be deplored, and constitutes a condemnatory blot, which almost no degree of excellence in other respects can countervail.” The general conclusion of Schaff’s soteriology in his histories was that his arguments result in “a dreadful perversion of divine truth, and a darkening of the way of salvation.”<sup>62</sup>

Schaff initiated the soteriological controversy early on in *History of the Apostolic Church* by declaring, “For since Christ, as Redeemer, is to be found neither in Heathenism, nor in Judaism, nor in Islamism, but only in the church, the fundamental proposition: ‘Out of Christ no salvation,’ necessarily includes the other: ‘No salvation out of the church.’ This, of course, does not imply, that mere external connection with it is of itself sufficient for salvation, but simply, that salvation is not divinely guaranteed out of the Christian church.”<sup>63</sup> Schaff admitted that there were many in the church who were members yet not ultimately connected to Christ in a saving manner, but he nevertheless reaffirmed, “Church-membership is not the *principle* of salvation—which is Christ

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<sup>61</sup> “ART. VI—Prof. Schaff’s Church History,” *New Englander* 12, no 46 (May 1854): 251-252.

<sup>62</sup> “Dr. Schaff’s Church History,” *New York Evangelist*, February 16, 1854, 26; italics in original.

<sup>63</sup> Philip Schaff, *History of the Apostolic Church with a General Introduction to Church History*, trans. Edward D. Yeomans (New York: Charles Scribner, 1854), 9.

alone—but the necessary *condition* of it; because it is the divinely-appointed means of bringing the man into contact with Christ and all his benefits.”<sup>64</sup> Of all the distinctions between Schaff’s theology and the consensus of evangelical theology, demanding church-membership for salvation created the largest division and presented the most problems to his evangelical readers.

Making church-membership central to salvation created several disputes that struck at the heart of Christianity and alienated certain sects of the church.<sup>65</sup> One reviewer from the Baptist journal, *The Christian Review*, argued that Schaff’s “theory might not be so objectionable, were not the term church, in this sense, plainly enough restricted to the larger bodies to which the name is applied, and denied to the parties which have dissented from them.” The conclusion that the reviewer suggested was that Schaff “does not consider the Baptists as forming, fairly and properly, a part of the church...,” which means that God’s grace is not sufficient for saving Baptists!<sup>66</sup> It is impossible to know if he believed that Baptists truly could not be saved, but he did consider them to be “hyper-spiritualistic” and lumped them together with Gnostics and Quakers.<sup>67</sup>

If some sects are tossed out, which ones should be kept? Whatever the scenario, according to *The Christian Review*, most sects will falter and fail before the second

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<sup>64</sup> Schaff, *History of the Apostolic Church*, 9; italics in original.

<sup>65</sup> “ART. VI—Prof. Schaff’s Church History,” *New Englander* 12, no. 46 (May 1854): 254.

<sup>66</sup> “ART. I—Schaff’s Apostolic History,” *The Christian Review* 20, no. 79 (January 1855): 11.

<sup>67</sup> Schaff, *History of the Apostolic Church*, 101-102.

coming.<sup>68</sup> Another reviewer answered, “The Romish Church, being the great historic development for ages, comprehends real Christians; but dissenters from that Church, and modern sects that disavow it, and regard it as anti-Christian, cut themselves off from the life of history, and therefore of Churchianity, and thence of Christianity and Christ.”<sup>69</sup>

The conclusion was that Schaff must throw out all sects except the Roman Catholic Church for his theory of development and theology to be consistent. Even concerning strictly theological issues, the religious press still dragged in condemnations of Catholic sympathies.

*The Christian Watchman and Reflector* found fault in the genesis of Schaff’s soteriology. By having his theory of development originate with Schelling, Hegel, and Schleiermacher, Schaff intertwined salvation with the concepts of Christianity as life and the Church as the mediator for that life.<sup>70</sup> Ultimately, as a reviewer explained, “it unfortunately reverses the order of the vital current, making it flow from the church into the individual believer, instead of through the individual believer into the church.”<sup>71</sup>

For evangelical Protestants, salvation required no mediation of the church or baptism; Jesus alone saved.<sup>72</sup> Reviewers adhering to this 1 Timothy 2.5 theology of the mediation for salvation found Schaff guilty of making the church the means by which

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<sup>68</sup> “ART. I—Schaff’s Apostolic History,” *The Christian Review* 20, no. 79 (January 1855): 12.

<sup>69</sup> “Dr. Schaff’s Church History,” *New York Evangelist*, February 16, 1854, 26.

<sup>70</sup> “Dr. Schaff’s Church History,” *Christian Watchman and Reflector*, March 2, 1854, 34.

<sup>71</sup> “Schaff’s Church History,” *Christian Watchman and Reflector*, February 23, 1854, 30.

<sup>72</sup> “ART. I—Schaff’s Apostolic History,” *The Christian Review* 20, no. 79 (January 1855): 12.

sinner find Christ and are saved.<sup>73</sup> Not only the church, but membership in the church was understood as a condition for salvation: “There are no real Christians, who are not, *at the same time*, connected with Christ’s visible kingdom on earth, and without this, there is no Christianity, no real union with Christ.”<sup>74</sup> The idea of any mediating force between Christ and people was reprehensible to Schaff’s opponents. These criticisms, as noted above, were in line with Schaff’s own writings. Whereas referring to Schaff as a pantheist or Papist significantly stretched the truth of Schaff’s writings, condemnations of Schaff’s soteriology were some of the most grounded and persuasive arguments.

The Roman Catholic Church in some ways exacerbated the criticisms of salvation—and Schaff’s writings in general—by being the church guiltiest of perverting simple the soteriology of *sola fide* propounded by Schaff’s critics. The Bible places Jesus first and the Church second, but critics found Schaff guilty of reversing the order by making it “a theory of the body, in place of the Head—putting the head behind the body, and the body before the head. Instead of inculcating faith in Christ, it enjoins faith in the Church, and dependence on the Church, and on Christ only through the Church.”<sup>75</sup> Another reviewer, using different New Testament allusions, explained, “Christ declares that He is the vine and His people are the branches; Dr. Schaff declares that the Church is the vine; and Christ is only *the root*. Christ declares that He is the door, and whoever entereth in by Him shall be saved; Dr. Schaff declares that the Church is the door, and no

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<sup>73</sup> “For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Timothy 2.5 ESV).

<sup>74</sup> “Dr. Schaff’s Theory of Church History,” *New York Evangelist*, February 23, 1854, 30; italics in original.

<sup>75</sup> “Dr. Schaff’s Theory of Church History,” *New York Evangelist*, February 23, 1854, 30.



man can come to Christ but by the Church.”<sup>76</sup> The theory promoted “an earthly despotism instead of a heavenly kingdom.”<sup>77</sup> Concerning the lack of salvation without a visible church, one reviewer compared the reversal of the order of salvation to a familiar Old Testament passage: “A startling development, surely! completely reversing the New Testament plan of salvation. It reminds us of a similar development in Judaism, when Aaron made the golden calf and called on the Israelites to worship ‘the gods which had brought them out of the land of Egypt.’ Dr. Schaff transforms the Church into a golden calf, which usurps the reverence and worship due only to Christ.” Referring to the church as the golden calf is certainly a weighty criticism. The even weightier criticism that shortly followed was calling Schaff’s theory “worse than Romanism itself.”<sup>78</sup>

The church, as the mediator and condition of salvation, was given divine power through Schaff’s theory, argued one critic, and “the theanthropic life of Christ is carried over by its ministrations to believers; its ministers have more than earthly power; its sacraments have inherent objective efficiency.”<sup>79</sup> Thus, Schaff’s Catholic sympathies again collided with his soteriology, and he received strictures for both because he promoted how the Catholic Church viewed salvation, promoted the mediation of the church, and advocated for the sacraments between man and Christ as means of grace.

A reviewer from *The New York Evangelist* found the idea of church-membership as a condition for salvation also repulsive because “this proposition unchristianizes all

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<sup>76</sup> “Dr. Schaff’s Church History,” *Christian Watchman and Reflector*, March 2, 1854, 34.

<sup>77</sup> “Dr. Schaff’s Theory of Church History,” *New York Evangelist*, February 23, 1854, 30.

<sup>78</sup> “Dr. Schaff’s Church History,” *Christian Watchman and Reflector*, March 2, 1854, 34.

<sup>79</sup> *The Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review* 26, no 1 (January 1854): 189.

those persons who, by the grace of God, are brought to believe in Christ—awakened, convinced, converted by the Holy Spirit, but yet have not made a public profession of their faith, not been united to the visible Church by baptism.”<sup>80</sup> The conclusion was that baptism became a second condition to salvation because it was the route through which one could become a church member. Another critic from *The Christian Watchman and Reflector* pointed out the logical inconsistencies of Schaff’s argument, writing, “We cannot reconcile such discrepancies. If faith is the ‘*only condition* of salvation,’ and faith is required *before* baptism, as the New Testament abundantly teaches, and baptism is the door of admission into the historic church, as Dr. Schaff earnestly contends, this labored theory of an organic church, interposed between Christ and the believer, is a transparent fiction, or a giant fraud. If the believer is saved by faith, he is saved before entering the womb of the church.”<sup>81</sup>

Schaff’s “discrepancies” concerning baptism and salvation have a bias towards credobaptism, wherein a believer is baptized only after a profession of belief like with Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch.<sup>82</sup> In *History of the Christian Church*, Schaff conceded that immersion baptism was historically normative in the apostolic era.<sup>83</sup> While immersion baptism does not equate to credobaptism, admitting immersion baptism at

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<sup>80</sup> “Dr. Schaff’s Church History,” *New York Evangelist*, February 16, 1854, 26.

<sup>81</sup> “Dr. Schaff’s Church History,” *Christian Watchman and Reflector*, March 23, 1854, 46. These arguments are in line with the typical Calvinist predestination arguments for salvation, as based in Romans 8.

<sup>82</sup> See Acts 8.26-40.

<sup>83</sup> “Dr. Schaff as a Historian,” *The Independent*, December 2, 1858, 4. *The American Theological Review* also commented, “The Apostolicity of Infant Baptism, we are glad to see, is contended for more earnestly than has been the fashion of late in Germany; but as to the mode of baptism in the Apostolic age, we would rather not see immersion so easily conceded” (“ART. X—Schaff’s Church History,” *The American Theological Review* 2 [May 1859]: 326).

least suggests credobaptism. It would, after all, be rather cruel to immerse an infant fully in water.

In the earlier *History of the Apostolic Church*, however, Schaff argued for paedobaptism. Schaff corresponded infant baptism to circumcision and contested that the entire households who were baptized in the New Testament would have had children.<sup>84</sup> He also argued that “the ultimate authority for infant baptism...lies in the *universal import of Christ’s person and work*, which extends as far as humanity itself. Christ is not only able, but willing, to save mankind of all classes, in all circumstances, of both sexes, and at all stages of life, and consequently to provide for all these the necessary means of grace (comp. Gal. 3:28).”<sup>85</sup> Schaff understood baptism as a vehicle for grace, and because adults and children can be saved, the vehicle for grace as found in baptism should be used as soon as possible. Believing only in the validity of adult baptism destroys the meaning of Jesus’ young life and “robs the Saviour’s *infancy* of its profound and cheering significance.”<sup>86</sup> While Schaff accepted the Biblical precedent for faith followed by baptism, he argued that the preaching of the gospel and the faith needed prior to baptism were only minimally required. Contrary to what the Baptists taught, the apostles required “simply an honest longing for salvation in Christ; which salvation was then actually administered and sealed to them by baptism, and afterwards nourished and developed by

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<sup>84</sup> For example, 1 Corinthians 1.16.

<sup>85</sup> Schaff, *History of the Apostolic Church*, 571-572. Galatians 3.28: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (ESV).

<sup>86</sup> Schaff, *History of the Apostolic Church*, 572-573; italics in original. Schaff was also disappointed that Neander so readily conceded credobaptism as normative in the apostolic era (571).

other means of grace.”<sup>87</sup> Whereas the Baptists argued for adult baptism because children had not yet reached the age of reason where they could accept for themselves the free gift of salvation, Schaff considered that the “receptivity for the divine, or faith in its incipient form and slumbering germ, may be found in the child, even purer than in the adult.”<sup>88</sup> Granting children an unconscious ability to receive God’s grace gives them the right and need for baptism, and those who deny this ability consequently must “condemn all children without exception to perdition.” Because all are born in sin and as objects of God’s righteous wrath, children must necessarily be condemned to suffer in hell eternally if they are not granted grace through baptism by virtue of the seed of faith already inside them.<sup>89</sup>

*The Christian Review* took a forceful stand against Schaff’s arguments for infant baptism. The author conceded to being “greatly in the dark” in regards to the eternal status of all people before Christ and children outside of Christian lands since Christ’s

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<sup>87</sup> Schaff, *History of the Apostolic Church*, 574. In the case of the Ethiopian eunuch, the situation is unclear in regards to the length of time Philip spent preaching to the eunuch. Considering that Philip begins with the passage from Isaiah 53.7-8 as a stepping point to explain the entirety of the Gospel, it seems like the conversation would have had to have been relatively in-depth, especially for the eunuch, and not Philip, to suggest the need for being baptized.

<sup>88</sup> Schaff, *History of the Apostolic Church*, 575-576.

<sup>89</sup> Schaff, *History of the Apostolic Church*, 576. One significant question arises with Schaff’s argument: who has agency in salvation? Is it Christ alone? Is it man and Christ? Or is it man alone? Curiously, Schaff does not attempt to address Romans 8:28-30 in his discussion of baptism: “And we know all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified” (ESV). While it is admittedly a Calvinist argument, the passage infers that the agency is in Christ alone, who, for his purpose and plan, set aside those who would follow without need for them to save themselves, thus bypassing the entirety of Schaff’s argument.

first coming, but the author refused “conjectures, assertions, vague popular opinions, or doubtful interpretations of obscure and uncertain passages of Scripture, as knowledge.” Furthermore, the author contended that, according to Schaff’s reasoning, all infants who die before being baptized must suffer eternity in hell, and “hence the ground on which he advocates infant baptism is really this: *baptism is essential to salvation.*”<sup>90</sup> On the contrary, the author asserted the necessity of faith for baptism and faith alone for salvation.

Schaff also supported an “*organic connection between Christian parents and their children,*” which means that a parent cares for their own obligations to Christ as well as their children’s.<sup>91</sup> *The Christian Review* found Schaff’s words and meaning “highly objectionable” because “it supposes the soul and moral character of the child to be derived from the parents, in just the same way as the body is derived from them. It is thus a revival of the ancient traducianism. It is a gross, physical conception applied to explain the origin of the soul and its moral state.”<sup>92</sup> The author contended that Schaff misunderstood the connection between children and parents in regards to faith, especially when one parent is an unbeliever. Creationism and traducianism certainly can be

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<sup>90</sup> “ART. I—Schaff’s Apostolic History,” *The Christian Review* 20, no. 79 (January 1855): 19-20; italics in original.

<sup>91</sup> Schaff, *History of the Apostolic Church*, 577.

<sup>92</sup> “ART. I—Schaff’s Apostolic History,” *The Christian Review* 20, no. 79 (January 1855): 21. For a brief but informative discussion of the differences and Biblical evidence for creationism and traducianism, see Grudem, 484-486. Grudem tentatively places creationism as the preferable doctrine but issues a word of caution against making definite statements on an issue that the Bible gives too little information for a decisive decision. Either way, Grudem considers the issue a very minor one in the grand scheme of Christian doctrine.

considered among the supralapsarian topics of theology.<sup>93</sup> That such a relatively minor detail caused a reviewer to respond to Schaff illustrates how seriously readers took matters of theology. Despite the forceful objections, the author concluded, “With the exception which we have briefly stated, we commend cordially to all our readers this able volume. Christian ministers can not afford to be without it.”<sup>94</sup>

While some critics still recommended Schaff’s histories despite their objections, many held to a conclusion similar to that from “C.” of *The Independent*: “We can not but regard Dr. Schaff’s work, with its plausible apologies for sin, its degradation of the claims of Christianity, and evidences of the same, its special pleading in behalf of the Papacy, and its presentation of church-membership, instead of faith in *Christ*, as *constituting true piety*;—we can but regard his work, on these and other accounts, as constituting, in history, an immoral and demoralizing production. It is difficult to be too severe in regard to it.”<sup>95</sup> Many of the above referenced articles from academic and non-academic sources include such severe condemnations.

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<sup>93</sup> See Grudem, 679.

<sup>94</sup> “ART. I—Schaff’s Apostolic History,” *The Christian Review* 20, no. 79 (January 1855): 22.

<sup>95</sup> C., “Dr. Schaff’s Apology for the Papacy,” *The Independent*, April 13, 1854, 1; italics in original.

*The Fruit and the Root*

Concerns over Schaff's papist leanings or poor soteriology still only represent the fruit of the criticism.<sup>96</sup> In some cases, his critics had very real, grounded criticisms of his work, especially in regards to the Church's involvement in salvation. Schaff's requirement of institutional involvement in salvation is just the fruit of his theological paradigm. At the root, Schaff's Christianity was institutionally orientated, indebted to historical interpretations of the Bible, and distinctly European. American evangelical Christians, whose ideals of private judgment, Common Sense reasoning, and republican values that Schaff rejected, attacked him because his un-American Christianity powerfully threatened every Christian value in America. Furthermore, Schaff's works on Christian history found conflicts among the learned and the lay. Evangelical Christians did not leave matters of theology only to the theologians. The eternal matters at stake show with fascinating clarity the populist nature of antebellum Christianity.

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<sup>96</sup> One area of doctrinal contention not mentioned above comes from Unitarian criticisms of Schaff for his Trinitarian theology. See: *The Universalist Quarterly and General Review* 14 (October 1857): 428-429; and, "Notices of New Publications: History of the Apostolic Church," *Christian Inquirer* 13, no. 22 (February 1859): 1. One review of *History of the Christian Church*, however, considered that most of the content in the history "may be fit for a partisan pamphlet, but is out of place in a respectable history" because of Schaff's Trinitarian doctrine (ART. VII—Review of Current Literature: Theology and Church History," *Christian Examiner* 66, no. 3 [May 1859]: 439-440).

## CHAPTER VI

## IN DEFENSE OF SCHAFF

Schaff, in the face of so many critics, stood alongside several allies, most of whom were from his own German Reformed denomination.<sup>1</sup> The *Mercersburg Review* provided the only consistent source of academic support for Schaff's theory of development. During the period of this study, the *Mercersburg Review* stood as one of the major academic theological journals.<sup>2</sup> Likewise, the *German Reformed Messenger* gave support for Schaff. No other popular religious periodical supported him week after week.

Occasionally, however, Schaff's opponents appreciated his treatment of the New Testament as inspired and sacred.<sup>3</sup> *The New Englander* had an unusual review an 1857 printing of *History of the Apostolic Church* in which criticisms were few. The review acknowledged the usefulness of the theory of development towards a deeper, broader understanding of orthodox theology and reminded its readers, "There is no fear of evil results, unless the student content himself with a superficial study of the subject." As an

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<sup>1</sup> Not all from the German Reformed Church approved of Schaff and the Mercersburg Theology. The Mercersburg Theology almost split the German Reformed Church at the height of its controversy. See: Sydney E. Ahlstrom, "Introduction," in *Theology in America: The Major Protestant Voices from Puritanism to Neo-Orthodoxy*, ed. Sydney E. Ahlstrom (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1967), 52.

<sup>2</sup> George H. Schriver, "The Mercersburg Review," in *Religious Periodicals of the United States: Academic and Scholarly Journals*, ed. Charles H. Lippy (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), 348.

<sup>3</sup> "Schaff's Church History," *Christian Watchman and Reflector*, February 23, 1854, 30.



added admonition, the writer concluded that those who fail to delve deeply enough will find themselves divided like the church at Corinth, and they “will also be betrayed into a flippant, irreverent handling of the Sacred Scriptures. Examples of this foolish shallowness, we have more than once met with.” Because the reviewer begins by stating that “the work has become too well known to require criticism,” it would be impudent to label the review as positive in its entirety. The review, however, represents one of the few reviews outside of those from the *Mercersburg Review* and the *German Reformed Messenger* that did not overwhelmingly condemn Schaff as a papist or a pantheist.<sup>4</sup>

G. Dering Wolff, in defense of Schaff, denounced his opponents by declaring, “Very many of the religious papers and periodicals of the day, seem disposed to favor or denounce ideas brought to their notice, not according to their truth, or falsity, but according to the extent to which it is supposed that they will produce benefit or injury to particular interests.”<sup>5</sup> Schaff’s allies sought to highlight the veracity of his historical claims in order to vindicate him and his theory of development from the unjust critics who believed that he was a pantheist or a papist with poor theology.

Schaff’s allies did not attempt to refute every negative remark on the theory of development or on Schaff’s theology. In some cases, the refutations contained almost little substance. His allies, while writing about specific issues in his defense, had more important concerns underlying their arguments. Because Schaff’s critics ultimately attacked his Christianity because of his rejection of the consensus of evangelical

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<sup>4</sup> *The New Englander* 16, no. 61 (February 1858): 186-187.

<sup>5</sup> G. Dering Wolff, “ART. II—The Essential Nature of Christianity and the Fundamental Law,” *The Mercersburg Quarterly Review* 6 (January 1854): 63.

Christianity, his allies' goals in their defenses were much larger than simply refuting that Schaff was not a pantheist or a papist.

*Advocates for the Theory of Development as a Philosophy of History*

Not all of Schaff's critics derided the theory of development as a philosophy of history. John W. Nevin, most notably, argued for a similar theory of development as the basis of historical studies.<sup>6</sup> Nevin, as noted earlier, received criticisms for his philosophy of history, and Schaff received condemnation for his defense of Nevin. Nevin's keen mind for understanding history without—or at least with less of—a Protestant-biased lens allowed him to conclude, much to the derision of others, “no sophistry can ever make early Christianity to be the same thing with Protestantism.”<sup>7</sup>

Other less known authors argued just as forcefully within the pages of the *Mercersburg Review* for acceptance of Nevin and Schaff's theory of development. One preliminary review of *History of the Christian Church* gave perhaps the highest praise possible by concluding with the prayer, “May God continue to him life and health to finish so great and important an undertaking with the energy and compass of thought with which it has begun.”<sup>8</sup> Most who wrote were not famous scholars. One editorial commented on an article defending Schaff and the theory of development that “although

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<sup>6</sup> See the preliminary essay from *The Mystical Presence* for a complete discussion of the theory of development from Nevin.

<sup>7</sup> John W. Nevin, “Cyprian: Fourth and Last Article,” *Mercersburg Review* 4, no. 6 (1852): 561.

<sup>8</sup> E. V. G., *Mercersburg Review* 11 (January 1859): 148.

penned by a mere school boy, [it] literally annihilates Dr. Janeway's labored Contrast [a thirty-seven-page pamphlet denouncing Schaff]."<sup>9</sup>

In 1854, G. Dering Wolff took up Schleiermacher's maxim of Christianity as a life and argued that Christianity's purpose should be found in its nature and not in what it does. "WHATEVER may be thought of the so-called 'Mercersburg' Theory of Historical Development in its specific details," wrote Wolff, "we do not see how the truth of the general idea, which forms its foundation, can be questioned. If it is, one of two positions must of necessity be assumed: First, that Christianity is not a new life brought into the world in the person of Jesus Christ; or secondly, that, though it be such a life, it is not governed in its action by the law of life."<sup>10</sup> Wolff argued for the theory of development as essential for understanding the purpose of Christianity because Christianity consists of more than a set of doctrines, and making Christianity only about believing the "right" doctrine denies the power of the Holy Spirit. If Christianity were only about law, ethics, or morality, it would suffer similarly and be denied its right as the only true religion. Jesus would then be no different from Socrates, Confucius, or Moses.<sup>11</sup>

Thus, what governs Christianity is the "Law of Life," and to answer what the "Law of Life" means for Christianity, Wolff replies, "We answer that of GROWTH or 'ORGANIC DEVELOPMENT.'" He additionally reaffirmed how the theory of organic development had been "frequently and clearly stated, especially [by] Drs. Nevin and

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<sup>9</sup> Spectator, "A Rather Doubtful Course," *German Reformed Messenger*, July 20, 1853, 3918; the article to which Spectator refers is: G. B. Russel, "ART. III—The Church of the Middle Ages," *The Mercersburg Quarterly Review* 5 (January 1853): 50-75.

<sup>10</sup> G. Dering Wolff, "ART. II—The Essential Nature of Christianity and the Fundamental Law," *The Mercersburg Quarterly Review* 6 (January 1854): 20.

<sup>11</sup> Wolff, 21-23.

Schaff.” Organic development within the church means “that Christianity can be regarded as consistent and identical with itself in every age, and nation, and in all its various changes, in regard to doctrine, practice, government, worship, and in other respects.” Consistency does not mean that Christianity has been the same throughout history but rather that “external modifications” occurred while it remained true to itself. Wolff similarly used the metaphor of a person being born, growing up, maturing, and growing old as the various phases of Christianity.<sup>12</sup>

Wolff’s defense of the theory of development concluded with an emphatic remark that the theory of development is ultimately pro-Protestantism. Thus, he attempted to vindicate Schaff from the label of “pantheist” because Schaff was a great defender of Christianity. For Wolff, the theory of development illuminates the beauty and orthodoxy of Protestant Christian doctrines and life because it shows how all of history has “carried it [Protestantism] forward and upward to a higher stage of its progress.”<sup>13</sup>

Responses in defense of Schaff’s theory of development also appeared within the pages of the *German Reformed Messenger*. An article in response to a review of *Geschichte der Christlichen Kirche* from *The Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review* defended Schaff for Schaff’s defense of Schleiermacher.<sup>14</sup> After the publication of *History of the Apostolic Church*, the *German Reformed Messenger* commented on how the theory of development “seems to have given some more or less trouble. . . .” The explanation for the theory of development causing trouble, however, was simply that it

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<sup>12</sup> Wolff, 39, 53-54.

<sup>13</sup> Wolff, 55, 57, 66.

<sup>14</sup> “Dr. Schaff’s Church History,” *German Reformed Messenger*, November 26, 1851, 3382.

was a new theory to America, but those judging it so harshly would see in time the beauty and truth of the theory.<sup>15</sup>

Roswell Hitchcock, who in March of 1859, as noted above, declared the theory of development unnecessary, reversed his views less than a year later with an article that recommended cautious acceptance of the theory of development. In the article, he explains that the Roman Catholic Church and many Protestant sects disavow the theory of development because they use “the Church of the primitive age as the model for all ages. They differ only in regard to what the Church of that age actually was. Rome says there has been no change. These men say there ought not to have been any.”<sup>16</sup> Hitchcock argued for a middle ground between denial of the theory of development and utter dependence on it. He admits that the church has never regained its perfection from the New Testament, but he argues that throughout history, the Church militant has been progressing towards the Church triumphant.<sup>17</sup> While Hitchcock offers no examples or references to Schaff, he does illustrate the changing attitude towards the acceptance of the theory of development as a valid philosophy of history.

### *The Champion of Protestantism*

Schaff’s few vocal supporters offered little innovation in theology or history besides his colleague at Mercersburg, John W. Nevin. G. Dering Wolff reiterated

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<sup>15</sup> “Dr. Schaff’s Church History,” *German Reformed Messenger*, March 15, 1854, 4054.

<sup>16</sup> Roswell D. Hitchcock, “ART. II.—Historical Development of Christianity,” *The American Theological Review* 5 (February 1860): 30.

<sup>17</sup> Hitchcock, “ART. II.—Historical Development of Christianity,” 30, 38.

Schaff's ideas about Christianity being a life.<sup>18</sup> G. B. Russel advanced the idea that the Church is the channel through which the life of Christianity flows. If what was so evil and awful in the Middle Ages was a true part of the church's being rather than just the unfortunate remains of a people not yet fully sanctified, "then, by its own self-conscious deceit, by its deliberate tricks and consummate hypocrisy, the Church has not always been what it was designed by Christ our Lord to be, the repository and mediate channel of saving truth. And then its Founder and Head must have been most wretchedly deceived, and uttered a gross falsehood, when he said it should never fail."<sup>19</sup>

Russel, however, never attempted to validate from the New Testament why the church is lifeline of salvation from man to the Father. Had he attempted his defense from the Bible, it would have been a poor case at best due to the paucity of passages in regards his theology. In this regard, evangelical Christians had plenty of reasons to be concerned with Schaff's theology and his allies' defenses. Schaff advocated for a salvation very much opposed to the individualistic, Biblically orientated theology of evangelical Christians, which reinforces why Schaff received criticism from the entire spectrum of denominations.

Concerns over the accusations of Schaff being a papist and his Catholic sympathies provoked more responses than those concerning soteriology. Schaff's colleague, John W. Nevin, as noted in chapter two, had similar ideas about church history, theology, and the theory of development. In a series of articles on the early church published in the early 1850s, he highlighted the reality of the post-apostolic age being

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<sup>18</sup> Wolff, 53-54.

<sup>19</sup> G. B. Russel, "ART. III—The Church of the Middle Ages," *The Mercersburg Quarterly Review* 5 (January 1853): 70-71.

closer to Catholicism than Protestantism through sound arguments and extensive primary source evidence. Usually Nevin wrote as a descriptive historian but often turned into an apologist for the early church fathers and the Catholic Church.<sup>20</sup> Rather than filtering the history of the early church through a Protestant denominational filter, Nevin contended, “No sophistry can ever make early Christianity to be the same thing with Protestantism.”<sup>21</sup> The sacraments, purgatory, worship of the saints, celibacy, and other Roman Catholic doctrines existed in the early church. The doctrines formed an essential part of these early Christians’ faiths and prepared the way for the Roman Catholic Church of the Middle Ages.<sup>22</sup> Because the early Church had more in common with Catholicism than Protestantism, however, did not equate to Nevin condemning the Reformation. On the contrary, because he held to a theory of development roughly commensurate to Schaff, he could write,

Then there are but two general ways of vindicating the Reformation. We must either make all previous Christianity, back to the time of the Apostles, a Satanic apostacy [*sic*] and delusion, and say that the Church took a new start in the sixteenth century, as original as that of the day of Pentecost, and a good deal more safe and sure; which is to give up historical Christianity altogether, and so if we understand it the whole conception also of a supernatural holy and apostolic church. Or else we must resort to the theory of historical development, by which the Catholic form of the church shall be regarded as the natural and legitimate course of its history onward to the time of the Reformation, and the state of things since to be taken as a more advanced state of that same previous life, struggling forward to a still higher and far more glorious consummation in time to come.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> James Hastings Nichols, *Romanticism in American Theology: Nevin and Schaff at Mercersburg* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), 203.

<sup>21</sup> John W. Nevin, “Cyprian: Fourth and Last Article,” *Mercersburg Review* 4, no. 6 (1852): 560-561.

<sup>22</sup> John W. Nevin, “Early Christianity: Third Article,” *Mercersburg Review* 4, no. 1 (January 1852): 4.

<sup>23</sup> Nevin, “Cyprian,” 561.

Like Schaff, Nevin also understood the Catholic Church as a link in the chain connecting the apostolic churches to the millennial church. Nevin composed astutely historical articles with forceful arguments, but his battles often came alongside Schaff rather than directly in his defense.

Articles from Wolff and G. B. Russel in the *Mercersburg Review* also provided some of the academic defense for Schaff in more direct terms against accusations of being a papist. Schaff's allies could without hesitation declare that "we have no special love for the Roman communion, as such, and still less for its practices....," but they still defended Schaff and the theory of development for having a reasonable view of Catholicism and its history.<sup>24</sup>

Russel, in defense of Schaff's Catholic sympathies, penned an article refuting Janeway's first pamphlet, *A Contrast*. Russel diligently argued every point Janeway made by writing a twenty-six-page review of a thirty-seven-page pamphlet. He styled part of his criticisms after the model of verbally assaulting Janeway for copying page after page of Mosheim's history of the Church with only a couple of pages actually written by Janeway, which made it difficult to tell who is condemning Schaff.<sup>25</sup>

Russel also found in Janeway a contradiction of denying that anything Christian existed in the Roman Catholic Church of the Middle Ages—"the only sure index of Protestant orthodoxy"—but still referring to it as "the *Christian* Church." Russel admitted, like Schaff, "That there existed, abstractly considered, much mental darkness, gross ignorance, and error in those times, especially in the tenth century; that they teemed with

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<sup>24</sup> Wolff, 64.

<sup>25</sup> Russel, 50, 52.



evils, corruptions and abuses in religious life; that various vices and immoralities rioted in almost all social relations; and that anarchy, violence, and tyranny held sway in the departments of government and law....” Had Christianity not been present within the Roman Catholic Church of the Middle Ages, Russel demanded to know where it existed. Jesus never abandoned his bride, and the theory of development showed how Jesus was always present in the Church. Indeed, the church also functioned to keep the world from falling to pieces after the fall of Greco-Roman civilization. A correct and proper view of history should not, according to Russel, condemn any age of the church: “In doing justice to the Church of the Middle Ages, as well as of all ages, we betray not Protestantism, if this have any legitimate right to exist. Nor is Protestantism at all aided,—nay, positively it is injured,—by traducing the source from whence it sprung. Must the present age, if it claim to be in [*sic*] advance of what which preceded it, on that account, to prove its claim good, slander and traduce the mother that begat it?”<sup>26</sup>

Russel also sought to show that the church has always had some corruption. Corruption is clear in the New Testament, in Augustine’s time, and it even existed within Protestantism. “To bring forward all the corruptions and vices,” wrote Russel, “that the Protestants are in the habit of charging upon the existing Roman Catholic Church; and then join to these all that the Roman Catholics lay to the charge of the Protestant religion; together with what different branches of Protestantism are continually accusing one another of—and we have a rather dark picture of the Church, in the middle of this enlightened nineteenth century.”<sup>27</sup> Russel vindicated Schaff by illustrating the lack of

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<sup>26</sup> Russel, 56, 65-66, 72-73; italics in original.

<sup>27</sup> Russel, 70-71.

necessity to condemn the Roman Catholic Church but rather to present a fair view of its faults and vices. That is, criticizing Catholicism for the sake of making Catholic criticisms should not be the central feature of a history of the Church; rather, presenting the Catholic Church for what it was with its faults and its successes should be the proper way to present history with the theory of development as the core foundation of a philosophy of history.

Articles from the *German Reformed Messenger* also proudly defended Schaff from accusations of being a papist. Some of these articles presented refutations of Janeway's work, albeit in much shorter and more direct forms. One anonymous article considered Janeway "ridiculous" and makes fun of Janeway's "Herculean blast" at Schaff for having been utterly destroyed by "a mere school boy [Russel]."<sup>28</sup> Another article presenting recapitulations of articles from *Der Deutsche Kirchenfreund* and *Mercersburg Quarterly Review*, in regards to Janeway's *Contrast*, explained, "Someone has sent us a copy of this publication, contrasting a paragraph of Dr. Schaff's Principle of Protestantism, in which he gives the favorable side of the Middle Ages, with Dr. Mosheim's unfavorable side of the same period. Were it not that the Dr. is evidently in his dotage, it would be very difficult to account for the puerility of this performance. Verily a man must have verged not a little from the sphere of sound rationality, to undertake seriously to test the orthodoxy of any historical or theological work, by such a

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<sup>28</sup> Spectator, "A Rather Doubtful Course," *German Reformed Messenger*, July 20, 1853, 3918.

contrast as has been instituted.”<sup>29</sup> While less thoroughly argued, the words had much more force than Russel’s longwinded article.

Other articles from the *German Reformed Messenger* targeted concerns over Schaff’s view of the primacy of Peter. The sources of the attacks came from Janeway, again, and from J. W. Proudfit, both of whom devoted many pages to the task of condemning Schaff of the issue. Schaff’s allies supported Schaff’s view of Peter as being “Primus inter pares” and added that Peter’s primacy “never extended over the Universal Church...”<sup>30</sup> Another defense explained Peter’s primacy as “temporary and personal pre-eminence” but that Peter did not initiate a succession of Popes.<sup>31</sup> Schaff’s critics, according to his allies, also perverted Schaff’s interpretation of Matthew 16.18.<sup>32</sup>

Another aspect of defense came from authors defending Schaff as a champion of Protestantism rather than only refuting the claims of him being a papist. One review in response to an article from *The Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review* found it disconcerting that the *Princeton Review* considered “that some of his [Schaff’s] modes of expression and his adoption of Schleiermacher’s maxim that Christianity is not doctrine, but life, might incline some restless spirits to accept systems of German Theology that would not stand the test of straight-laced orthodoxy.” Quite on the contrary, the author extolled Schaff’s writings “as constituting, in their essential points, the strongest defence

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<sup>29</sup> “Notices of Books &c,” *German Reformed Messenger*, January 12, 1853, 3810.

<sup>30</sup> Protestant, “Strictures on a Late Review of Dr. Schaff’s History of the Church,” *German Reformed Messenger*, June 28, 1854, 1.

<sup>31</sup> S., ““Dr. Schaff’s Apology for the Papacy,”” *German Reformed Messenger*, April 26, 1854, 4079.

<sup>32</sup> Protestant, “Strictures,” 1.

[sic] ever put forth in this country ‘of the genuine old Reformation principles.’”<sup>33</sup>

Considering Schaff’s staunch form of Protestantism, his few supporters found it unfathomable that he would be a Papist.

Reviewers also defended Schaff by condemning the personal attacks against Schaff’s integrity. One reviewer stated that “‘C.’ misrepresented him in a most unjustifiable manner, so long as there is any meaning in that part of the decalogue [sic] which says: ‘Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.’”<sup>34</sup> Another found Schaff’s critics to be cruel without reason: “Not a single quality is allowed to enter the reviewer’s quotations, that permits any but the most unfavorable judgment concerning Peter as a church ruler, and Schaff as a man of sense. The case of the latter is really hard. He is first merciless plucked, and then set up as a scarecrow. He is made by mutilation to infer that some one has a happy talent for governing others, from the fact of being, ‘choleric,’ ‘impulsive,’ ‘sanguine,’ and ‘self-confident,’ and then laughed at for his stupidity in concluding such premises!”<sup>35</sup>

These reviewers found the verbal assaults against Schaff to be unwarranted, unnecessary, and unchristian. An article from *The Independent*, noting the mass number of critics who considered Schaff a papist, found it necessary to reply that while part of the reason was due to the theory of development, it was also “partly to a feeling of indignant reaction against certain vulgar and pedantic—both very shallow, though, to be sure

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<sup>33</sup> “Dr. Schaff’s Church History,” *German Reformed Messenger*, November 16, 1851, 3382.

<sup>34</sup> S., 4079.

<sup>35</sup> Protestant, “Strictures,” 1; italics in original.

(especially the vulgar sort,) quite popular—methods of dealing with popery.”<sup>36</sup> The religious press unduly placed American anti-Catholic sentiments on Schaff’s head. One other reviewer ably concluded, “let us differ, if we differ, as Christian men and with Christian candor and truthfulness. Let political demagogues, if they choose, vilify and misrepresent their antagonists, and raise false issues, and conjure up men of straw, and then demolish them with carnal gusto; but let it not be said, that *Christian ministers* deal thus one with another, however they may differ in opinion from each other.”<sup>37</sup>

The author’s plea is ironic, for both sides found it fitting to be vulgar when necessary to get their points across. Perhaps the most popular method of defending Schaff came from verbally assaulting the authors of negative reviews. *The New Brunswick Review*, a quarterly review, and *The New York Observer* as its voice to the public in this case, published several of the condemning articles mentioned in the previous chapter. They had been inspired by J. W. Proudfit’s extensive and condemning article, and several articles lauding Proudfit appeared in *The New York Observer*. In reviewing the article from *The New Brunswick Review*, the *German Reformed Messenger* had one critic for whom Schaff found little favor; the critic plainly stated, “I am no admirer of Dr. Schaff’s peculiarities: he has some bad kinks in his head.”<sup>38</sup> The reviewer still contended that anyone with an ounce of honesty would be disgusted by Proudfit’s review, but that would be only if the reader could make it through the article: “We have made three or four attempts to read it; but they have all proved unsuccessful. With all the patience we can

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<sup>36</sup> J. L., “Communications: Dr. Schaff and Popery,” *The Independent*, June 1, 1854, 170.

<sup>37</sup> S., 4079; italics in original.

<sup>38</sup> C. “New Brunswick Review,” *German Reformed Messenger*, June 14, 1854, 4106.

muster, and we have the reputation of possessing at least a moderate share, we cannot force ourselves through its pages. For garbled quotations, gross misrepresentations, stupidity and ignorance, combined with a great affectation of learning, we have never seen it equalled [*sic*].” The reviewer was actually ashamed to be of the same denomination as *The New Brunswick Review* for its review of Schaff because he could “clearly perceive that he [Schaff] is no Catholic or Jesuit. For this reason I cannot bear to see him bespattered by such a scavenger.”<sup>39</sup>

The next week, an editorial appeared that defended Proudfit and his followers. The commentator criticized Schaff for relying too heavily on secondary sources, and warned that “it will certainly ‘blow up’ the reputation of Dr. Schaff sky high—this selfcomplacent [*sic*], superficial, sentimental writer, who skims from the surface of ‘secondary sources.’ I would fain advise Dr. Schaff to hie [*sic*] himself away to the mountains of his native Switzerland, and there to abide; for his character as an able, impartial Church Historian is blasted for ages.” The commentator also lambasted Schaff for poor Greek exegesis, adding, “It is amazing how much importance a little learning, especially of languages, sometimes is!” The bulk of the criticisms, however, stemmed from the author condemning Schaff for being a papist. The commentator added that Proudfit “has made one discovery, which ought to be spread abroad for the information

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<sup>39</sup> C. “New Brunswick Review,” *German Reformed Messenger*, June 14, 1854, 4106. The author also relates a story that a minister he knew had been given an advanced copy of *The New Brunswick Review* so that he could write an article for a religious newspaper about the new review. The minister wrote to C., “I perceive that the new Dutch Review makes its debut with what it intends to be a spicy and annihilating article on Dr. Schaff, which for the ignorance, impudence and paltry misrepresentations displayed, surpasses every thing I have read for many a day.” C. considered the letter to be exaggerating until he actually read the article in the review.

of the many readers of Dr. Schaff's books, and that is, That Dr. Schaff lacks the most essential qualification of a Church Historian, viz: such an elevation of mind, that it will rise far above all narrow and sectional prejudices, enabling him 'to survey the whole with a truly philosophic (or better, a Christian) impartiality.'"<sup>40</sup>

On the previous page in the same issue, another article appeared that concerned Schaff. As if to prepare readers for the critical editorial, the reviewer wrote that "the course of our quondam Dutch friends towards our Church is outrageous beyond endurance, and the enlightened public will eventually see its true character." The article supposed that people would want to call themselves enlightened and would have to do so by defending their church, Schaff, and Schaff's allies. The article also condemned the harsh reviews that appeared in the *New York Observer* by concluding, "Verily a righteous God must eventually visit such conduct with its merited retribution, and do justice to a grossly wronged and injured band of his professed followers."<sup>41</sup>

The following week, another article was published in the *German Reformed Messenger* that directly condemned *The New Brunswick Review*'s original article from Proudfit: "After the perusal of this article every one must be amazed at the unparalleled instance of ignorance and stupidity; if not something worse, in the history of religious literature, which is here exposed. If we were ever permitted to be led so far astray as to involve ourselves in the unenviable predicament of the New Brunswick professor, we should speed our way to parts which we are unknown, and there commence a new and

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<sup>40</sup> B, "Dr. Proudfit and Dr. Schaff's Church History," *German Reformed Messenger*, June 21, 1854, 4111.

<sup>41</sup> "Dutch Honesty," *German Reformed Messenger*, June 21, 1854, 4110.

better career. Surely if there be still any feeling of shame in him, his present exposure must bring it to life.”<sup>42</sup>

The next week, an article appeared in the *German Reformed Messenger* that related, among other criticisms of Schaff’s critics, the several attempts by the authors to read Proudfit. The authors claim to have “commenced our work in good faith, read carefully, and referred to the sources as we went along. Such, however, were the unpardonable omissions, gross representations, and even literary forgeries, if we may so call them, which were continually forcing themselves upon our attention, that we could not but throw the book down in disgust, and the same result took place at every repeated effort to force ourselves through its pages.” Another critic of Schaff that the authors poked fun at was said to have “weak spots in his head.”<sup>43</sup>

Over the course of two months, the *German Reformed Messenger* found that the articles condemning Schaff that were coming from *The New York Observer* had improvements in its tone. The newspaper still found the articles mostly worthy of condemnation because “the writer starts out with the plainly intimated position, that Dr. Schaff is a Jesuit in disguise! and bases all his professed argumentation on the assumption, that Dr. Schaff’s view of the primacy of Peter and that of the Romish Church, are identical, whereas even the most casual reader of Dr. Schaff’s History knows, that he devotes several pages to the express object of proving that the view of the Roman

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<sup>42</sup> “The New Brunswick Reviewer,” *German Reformed Messenger*, June 28, 1854, 4114.

<sup>43</sup> “A Troublesom Customer,” *German Reformed Messenger*, July 5, 1854, 4118; the article appeared from *The New York Observer* appeared as a reprint in the *German Reformed Messenger*: B, “Dr. Proudfit and Dr. Schaff’s Church History,” *German Reformed Messenger*, June 21, 1854: 4111.



Catholic Church on this subject, is erroneous. A vast amount of puerility runs throughout the article. There is verily ample room for another ‘New York Observer’ castigation.”<sup>44</sup>

In no sense did the articles from the *German Reformed Messenger* pull any punches; the articles repeatedly called Schaff’s critics stupid and ignorant. Yet the articles, despite the harsh statements, had very little to say about Schaff or his critics. They were full of strictures with relatively little evidence. Even so, the articles quite effectively demolished Schaff’s opponents by brute force through the verbal assaults.

From a practical standpoint, harsh words sell better than kind ones. A more sensational story garners more readers than a dry and boring one, so it makes sense that the editors of the popular religious press would make an effort to keep publishing such insulting articles on either side of the divide. Additionally, however, some of Schaff’s doctrines are Biblically indefensible when fighting on the same grounds as evangelicalism, especially his requirement of church-membership for salvation. Retaliating through harsh words was far easier than making logical arguments from the little Biblical foundation Schaff had on select issues.

### *Defending the Root*

Overall, the articles in defense of Schaff primarily guarded his Christianity— and the German Reformed Church—but not himself as a scholar to the same degree. While defending certain views such as accepting the history of the Catholic Church or

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<sup>44</sup> “New Brunswick Review,” *German Reformed Messenger*, August 23, 1854, 4146.

advocating the theory of development took precedence in terms of content, those who defended Schaff intended their works to defend more than the superficial arguments. His critics attacked the root by way of the fruit, and his allies retaliated by protecting the root through the fruit as well. Advocating their version of Christianity, which differed significantly from the consensus of evangelical Christianity, was more important than the direct defense of Schaff's works. In many of the academic works, the writers only allude to Schaff or mention his name once or twice. Nevertheless, they argue for a variation of Christianity very similar to Schaff's un-American Christianity. In the popular religious press, advancing Schaff's Christianity came through verbal assaults and destroying his opponents' Christianity.

## CHAPTER VII

## EPILOGUE

Philip Schaff created significant controversies among evangelical Christians with his histories. Some labeled Schaff as a pantheist because of Schaff's German education and the theory's German origins in Hegel, Schelling, Schleiermacher, and Baur. Others presented criticisms because they believed that the theory of development put Schaff on a road to Rome. Because of his Catholic sympathies, critics labeled Schaff as a papist or worse. Under these superficial criticisms, Schaff's opponents attacked him because his Christianity stood in opposition of the consensus of evangelical Christianity.

Schaff did have allies and defenders who presented arguments for the theory of development and against the criticisms of Schaff as being a papist or pantheist. Reading Schaff now, one would find it difficult to conclude that Schaff was either a papist or a pantheist. A reasonable reading of Schaff shows a historian clearly proclaiming Jesus as the savior and redeemer of the world and as the center of all of history.

Because critics called Schaff a papist and a pantheist, a few conclusions can be made about the populist nature of antebellum American Christianity. First, Americans had considerable concerns about foreign theological influences on evangelical Christianity. America's Christianity was vibrant and booming as it separated itself from European Christianity. Europe had state-sponsored religion and had terrible revolutions; it also was home to characters like F. C. Baur, who denied the historicity of the resurrection. Schaff presented very European, High-Church ideas within his histories, but

Americans at all levels of society distrusted the European imports. Hence, Schaff was called a pantheist.

The documentary evidence of Americans at all levels calling Schaff a papist reinforces the history of American Protestantism's hatred towards anything Catholic. While Schaff was sympathetic towards some facets of Catholicism, he stood decidedly against Catholicism as being the true bearer of Christianity after the Reformation. Yet authors like J. J. Janeway still composed pamphlets condemning Schaff as a papist despite Schaff's rational understanding of Christianity during the Middle Ages. Anti-Catholicism was indeed rampant.

Considering the myriad of condemning articles before 1860, volumes two and three of Schaff's *History of the Christian Church*, released in 1867, ruffled few feathers. A reviewer from the *American Quarterly Church Review* approved of the work overall, despite minor troubles, and related "that Sectarians of all sorts, Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Methodists and Baptists, hail this *History* with such satisfaction."<sup>1</sup> Another review from *The American Presbyterian and Theological Review* noted some concerns over doctrinal issues but considered the issues inconsequential.<sup>2</sup> The *Christian Advocate* praised Schaff's book for being enjoyable to read and found the book on the whole to be "a masterpiece of Church history."<sup>3</sup> A week later, the *Christian Advocate* praised the volumes again.<sup>4</sup> The *New Englander* found Schaff's style again enjoyable and

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<sup>1</sup> *American Quarterly Church Review, and Ecclesiastical Register* 19, no 2 (July 1867): 315.

<sup>2</sup> "Church History," *The American Presbyterian and Theological Review* 5, no. 18 (April 1867): 339.

<sup>3</sup> "Schaff's Church History," *Christian Advocate*, March 7, 1867, 76.

<sup>4</sup> "Book Notices," *Christian Advocate*, March 14, 1867, 83.

the new volumes much better than the previous one.<sup>5</sup> Even Princeton reluctantly conceded the usefulness of the theory of development in Church history.<sup>6</sup> And, of course, the *German Reformed Messenger* and the *Mercersburg Review* approved of volumes II and III.<sup>7</sup> None of the reviews call Schaff a pantheist or a papist.

It is beyond the scope of this work to consider fully why Schaff's reviewers gave fewer critical remarks of the later volumes than the earlier volumes. One reason, however, for the decline in criticism is that Schaff's philosophy of history was slowly becoming outdated.<sup>8</sup> By the end of his life, Schaff still held on to the idea that history is divinely guided. Positivistic, truly scientific history, which took God out of history, passed Schaff by as modern history became planted in universities and seminaries.<sup>9</sup>

If the movement away from this style of history changed Schaff from being a pantheist to an outdated Protestant historian, why did Schaff not receive strictures for being a papist for the volumes of history covering late antiquity and the Middle Ages—the rise and height of the papacy? Perhaps one explanation is that being a papist was no longer the greatest criticism and greatest threat. Several prominent Protestants abandoned Protestantism for Catholicism in the 1840s and 1850s, such as Orestes Brownson and Levi Silliman Ives. John W. Nevin, Schaff's colleague, nearly became Catholic as well.

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<sup>5</sup> *New Englander* 26, no. 99 (April 1867): 358-360.

<sup>6</sup> *The Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review* 39, no. 3 (July 1867): 402.

<sup>7</sup> "Book Notices," *German Reformed Messenger*, February 27, 1867, 3; *Mercersburg Review* (July 1867): 476-479.

<sup>8</sup> Elizabeth A. Clark, *Founding the Fathers: Early Church History and Protestant Professors in Nineteenth-Century America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 158.

<sup>9</sup> David W. Lotz, "Philip Schaff and the Idea of Church History," in *A Century of Church History: The Legacy of Philip Schaff*, ed. Henry W. Bowden (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1988), 29-30.

Catholicism, however close it may have been in some minds to being a synagogue of Satan, was still in some sense of the word Christian. Historian James Hastings Nichols once suggested, “Positivist history must be secular history, and cannot be a history of the Church as the work of redemption in human life.”<sup>10</sup> The new history alienated God altogether from history, and authors like David Friedrich Strauss denied Jesus’ divinity.<sup>11</sup> The newer and far worse enemy was Godless history. Schaff still adhered to a history infused with Christ, so his histories had to be more respectable to the American evangelicals than histories that denied Christ his rightful place as the firstborn over all creation. While Schaff’s un-American Christianity did not seamlessly meld with evangelicalism, it became less dangerous.

While the secularization of Church history may have been an inevitable consequence, it is unfortunate that Schaff’s histories became outdated and relegated to discussions in academic books on history. While in some sense the histories are outdated because of the discoveries of new manuscripts and new developments in historical literary criticism, Schaff’s books are yet some of the most readable histories of the early church. Because he affirmed Jesus as God and viewed the entire Bible as inspired and true, his histories would be very amicable to the average Christian and still provide significant substance.

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<sup>10</sup> James Hastings Nichols, “The Art of Church History,” *Church History* 20, no. 1 (March 1951): 6.

<sup>11</sup> David Friedrich Strauss, *Das Leben Jesu für das Deutsche Volk Bearbeitet*, 4<sup>th</sup> Ed. (Leipzig: F. A. Brodhaus, 1874); English translation: David Friedrich Strauss, *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined*, trans. George Eliot, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. (London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co., 1892).

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