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THE NEW MERCERSBURG REVIEW

Journal of the Mercersburg Society

CONFESSING THE APOSTOLIC FAITH TODAY

The 1985 Convocation
Chambersburg, Pennsylvania

Number One

PHILIP SCHAFF

Autumn 1985

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THE NEW MERCERSBURG REVIEW
Journal of the Mercersburg Society

Benjamin Griffin, Editor

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EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION

The theme of the 1985 Convocation of the Mercersburg Society was "Confessing the Apostolic Faith Today." The Society sought to reflect in light of the Mercersburg Theology upon the World Council of Churches' document Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry and the Lutheran-Reformed dialogue.

The first issue of the New Mercersburg Review includes the major papers presented at the 1985 Convocation held in Chambersburg and Mercersburg, Pennsylvania. Readers of the papers will become quickly aware that the great Mercersburg theologian, John Williamson Nevin, was very much present.

Charles Yriogyan, Jr., a recognized historian and editor of the Mercersburg Movement, helps us in his essay place Mercersburg Theology within its historical setting, especially American revivalism, a religious phenomenon still present in this country.

Joseph Basset in his strikingly original article engages us with a kind of dialogue between Nevin and the BEM document's eucharistic section. We are again reminded how far Nevin was ahead of his time.

Harry Royer and Deborah Clemens in their contemporary papers address the place of the Creed in both Mercersburg and the BEM statement. Royer and Clemens prepared their presentations to be heard and read back-to-back.

Horton Davies, church historian and liturgical scholar, presents a forceful case for greater attention to liturgical studies in theological education. Davies' article deserves careful consideration by those responsible for the training of pastors.

One measure of the ongoing ecumenical commitment of Mercersburg is reflected in the fact that the contributors to this issue represent United Methodist, Unitarian, and United Church of Christ traditions. The Chambersburg Convocation also included presentations by the representatives of the Lutheran Church in America and the Reformed Church in America.

The New Mercersburg Review by its title has resurrected the name of one of the great theological journals of the 19th century. While those responsible for this new publication make no claim for the originality and influence of Nevin and Schaff's journal, they do hope you will find the New Review lively, interesting, and helpful in your service to Christ and the Church.

Benjamin Griffin
Editor

JOHN WILLIAMSON NEVIN'S THE ANXIOUS BENCH AND EVANGELICAL PARTY

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INTRODUCTION

John Williamson Nevin was one of the most important and influential personalities in the German Reformed Church in America in the nineteenth century. He and his colleague, Philip Schaff, were professors at the Theological Seminary of the German Reformed Church at Mercersburg, Pennsylvania. In numerous books, tracts, sermons, lectures, and in the pages of a theological journal, the Mercersburg Review, Nevin and Schaff analyzed the malaise of American Protestant theology. In their estimation it possessed a defective view of the church and its sacraments, primarily caused by a faulty Christology. As the progenitors of the Mercersburg Theology, Nevin and Schaff attempted to point the German Reformed Church and the larger Protestant community toward a better way. Their critique of American Protestantism and their suggestions for its reform deserved a wider audience.¹

Nevin's tract, The Anxious Bench, first published in 1843, and in a revised and enlarged second edition in 1844, represented his opening attack on the popular Protestantism of his day. The book created considerable controversy, especially among the German Reformed and Lutherans, and was considered by some to mark the beginning of a new epoch in the history of the German Reformed Church. Theodore Appel observed, "the publication of the Anxious Bench in 1843 was a turning point in the history of the Reformed Church which determined in a large degree its subsequent history."²

The purpose of this paper is to describe the circumstances which prompted Nevin to publish The Anxious Bench, to trace the main lines of its argument, and to raise the question of its pertinence to our time.

REVIVALISM AND THE "NEW MEASURES"

The early nineteenth century in America was characterized by a wave of religious excitement which swept across the young nation. Since it appeared in many places almost simultaneously, its exact origin is difficult to chart. Its similarity to the great religious "Awakening" of nearly a century earlier led people to call it the Second Great Awakening.

Like its predecessor, the Second Great Awakening placed great emphasis on a transforming personal experience of God's grace and reconciliation. It was expected that sinners would be sensitized to their wickedness, encouraged to trust in God's deliverance through faith in Christ, and be overpowered by the personal assurance of divine salvation. In countless camp meetings and revivals the wayward experienced conversion. Unlike the earlier Awakening, however, where the proponents seemed somewhat content to wait for the working of God to change the sinner, the advocates of the Second Great Awakening created

and utilized tactics called "new measures" which were designed to expedite the conversion of the unregenerate.⁴

Probably the best known promoter of "new measures" revivalism was Charles Grandison Finney (1792-1875). Finney, while a young lawyer in Adams, New York, experienced a profound conversion and was moved to enter the Presbyterian ministry. Following a period of theological study, Finney was ordained and proceeded to engage in a notable ministry as an itinerant evangelist. His unusual success as a traveling preacher, especially in western New York, soon attracted national attention. Invitations for him to conduct revivals were almost more abundant than he could accommodate.⁵

In 1835 Finney published his Lectures on Revivals of Religion. This volume clearly marked "the end of two centuries of Calvinism and the acceptance of pietistic evangelicalism as the predominant faith of the nation."⁶ It was also "a textbook on how to promote revivals of religion...(a) perennial classic to which...succeeding generations of revivalists have turned for authority and inspiration." The volume was designed as a handbook for preachers interested in promoting revivals and converting sinners. In addition to defining what revivals were, Finney advised his readers on the necessity and practice of prayer, how to witness and preach to the unconverted, obstacles to revival, how to instruct the new convert, and the problem of "backsliding."

One of the chapters in Finney's book was titled, "Measures to Promote Revivals." In this section he plainly defined and defended the "new measures" with which his ministry had become associated. He began with a lengthy apologetic statement in which he declared that God had "established no particular system of measures to be employed and invariably adhered to in promoting religion." Yet, he argued, "there must be some kind of measures adopted"⁸ if the minds of people are to be persuaded to attend to the Gospel. Finney then specified a number of innovative measures which were used over the centuries to advance the cause of religion. Just in the area of public worship there were ample illustrations: the dress of the clergy, Psalm-singing in rhyme, "lining" the hymns, choirs, pitchpipes, instrumental music, extemporaneous prayers, preaching without notes, kneeling for prayer, public prayers by laymen, lay exhortation, and female prayer in public gatherings where both sexes were present.⁹ "And who introduced these and other innovations?" Finney inquired. The apostles, Martin Luther and the reformers, John Wesley, George Whitefield, and Jonathan Edwards -- all of them accused of producing "new measures."¹⁰

There were three "new measures" in his day which Finney was especially interested in defending since they were under severe attack: the "anxious meeting" in which each individual present was personally questioned about his or her spiritual condition; the "protracted meeting," a revival campaign of several days or weeks duration;¹¹ and the "anxious seat (or bench)," which he described as a "particular seat in the place of meeting where the anxious may come and be addressed particularly, and be made subjects of prayer, and sometimes conversed with individually."¹² It was the "anxious seat" which forced the sinner to come to grips with the pride and delusion of the human heart. Coming to the "anxious seat" created a crisis of conscience through which the wicked could pass on to

the blessings of divine deliverance. In a section which must have deeply annoyed Nevin (if, indeed, he read Finney's Lectures). Finney wrote:

The church has always felt it necessary to have something of the kind to answer this very purpose. In the days of the apostles baptism answered this purpose. The gospel was preached to the people, and then all those who were willing to be on the side of Christ were called to be baptized. It held the precise place that the anxious seat does now, as a public manifestation to their determination to be Christians.¹³

Finney closed his defense of the "new measures" by observing that the church had never passed through "an extensive reformation" without them. Furthermore, he added,

Without any new measures it is impossible that the church should succeed in gaining the attention of the world to religion. There are so many exciting subjects constantly brought before the public mind, such a running to and fro, so many that cry "Lo here," and "Lo there," that the church cannot maintain her ground, cannot command attention, without exciting preaching, and sufficient novelty in measures, to get the public ear.¹⁴

Although he warned that "new measures" should be "introduced with the greatest wisdom and caution, and prayerfulness, and in a manner calculated to excite as little opposition as possible," still, "new measures" we must have."

The spirit of the Second Great Awakening and the employment of the "new measures" affected the life of the German Reformed Church. Not only were a number of its pastors using these revival techniques, but the "new measures" impressario, Charles G. Finney himself was preaching to its people. In 1828 Finney was invited to preach at the Race Street Church in Philadelphia. He later commented that this church was reputed to be "the largest house of worship in the city. It was always crowded; and it was said, it seated three thousand people, when the house was packed and the aisles were filled. There I preached statedly for many months."¹⁶ There he also made use of the "new measures." One German Reformed periodical reported on the Race Street revival: "Sinners were urged to immediate repentance and faith, and warned of the awful consequences of procrastination.... Arrows of conviction were hurled at the hearts of sinners, and instances of conversion occurred at almost every meeting."¹⁷

Soon, despite some vigorous opposition, revivals were appearing regularly in every part of the German Reformed Church. In 1841 the Classis of Maryland celebrated, "copious refreshings from the presence of the Lord," and noted,

The dead dry bones have been resuscitated from the death of sin and clothed with living beauty. They have become an army of saints in the camp of Israel's God and many of them are now actively engaged in winning, warming, encouraging, and directing sinners to the Savior.¹⁸

JOHN WILLIAMSON NEVIN AND REVIVALISM

The revivalism of the Second Great Awakening and the "new measures" touched the life of John Williamson Nevin in several ways. Three of them appear to be of major significance in his assessment of revivalism and the publication of The Anxious Bench.

NEVIN'S COLLEGE YEARS

Nevin first encountered revivalism during his college years. It left him theologically confused because he had been raised with a different understanding of the Christian faith.

Nevin was born on February 20, 1803 in Franklin County, Pennsylvania. His family was Scotch-Irish. He was brought up a Presbyterian¹⁹ and described his parents as "conscientious and exemplary" Christians. Nevin recalled that he was born and reared in "the old Presbyterian faith," which

was based throughout on the idea of covenant (sic) family religion, church membership by God's holy act in baptism, and following this a regular catechetical training of the young, with direct reference to their coming to the Lord's table. In one word, all proceeded on the theory of sacramental, educational religion, as it had belonged properly to all the national branches of the Reformed Church in Europe from the beginning...The system was churchly, as holding the Church in her visible character to be²⁰ the medium of salvation for her baptized children....

The Middle Spring Presbyterian Church to which his family belonged conducted its ministry with an emphasis on preaching, pastoral visitation, catechetical instruction by the family as well as by the pastor, and the administration of the sacraments. Nevin stated:

It was staid, systematical, and grave; making much of sound doctrine; wonderfully bound to established forms; and not without a large sense for the objective side of religion embodied in the means of grace.²¹

In the fall of 1817 the youthful Nevin was sent to Union College in Schenectady, New York. Although he was the youngest and smallest student in his class, and by his own admission not ready for college, he attained a respectable standing in his academic work and graduated with honors in 1821.²² Nevin's years at Union were not only critical in his intellectual maturation, but also in his religious development. At Union he had his first taste of revivalism and began to experience the tension between the churchly system of religion in which he had been raised and the revivalism which was becoming more popular.

The celebrated evangelist Asahel Nettleton was invited to the Union Campus to conduct a revival. Although it was not held under the official auspices of the college and was not endorsed by the school's President, Eliphalet Nott, it was supported by the Professor of Mathematics, the

Reverend Doctor Macauley and, Nevin remembered,

certain "pious students," previously Christianized *secundum artem*, who now all at once, were found competent to assist him in bringing souls to new birth. Miserable obstetricians the whole of them, as I now only too well remember! For I along with others came into their hands in anxious meetings, and underwent the torture of their mechanical counsel and talk. One after another, however, the anxious obtained "hope;" each new case, as it were, stimulating another; and finally, among the last, I struggled into something of the sort myself, a feeble trembling sense of comfort -- which my spiritual advisors, then, had no difficulty in accepting as all that the case required. In this way I was converted, and brought into the Church -- as if I had been altogether out of it before -- about the close of the seventeenth year of my age. My conversion was not fully up to my own idea, at the time, of what such a change should be; but it was as earnest and thorough no doubt, as that of any of my fellow-converts.²³

Ill health forced Nevin to return to his father's farm for two years following his graduation from Union. As his health was restored, he resolved to study theology at Princeton Seminary. He was not sure he should enter the ministry, but he believed that the seminary course would clarify that decision. He enrolled at Princeton in the fall of 1823. For the next five years, three as a seminarian and two as a substitute for the Princeton professor Charles Hodge who was on leave in Europe, Nevin experienced an acute theological tension between the "churchly" religion of his pre-college years and his "conversion" at Union. He wrote:

There were in fact two different theories or schemes of piety at work in my mind, which refused to coalesce. One was the New England Puritanic theory, as it had taken possession particularly of the revival system, which was now assuming to be the only true sense of the Gospel all over the country; the other was the old proper Presbyterian theory of the seventeenth century....²⁴

He continued,

So it was that I found myself in a sort of strait between these two systems, and knew not how to adjust the one rightly with the other in my religious life. The difficulty was a seriously practical one, and it attended me through all my Princeton years; although my mind, toward the end, began to take in regard of it, more and more,²⁵ the bent which came to prevail me fully at a later time.

Upon the end of his Princeton years, Nevin was licensed to preach. He accepted an invitation to teach at the recently opened Western Theological Seminary (Presbyterian) at Allegheny, Pennsylvania. From 1829 to 1839 Nevin's position at Western allowed time for theological maturity and a resolution of his ambivalence regarding revivalism of the "new measures"

type. His study of the early church fathers, his growing acquaintance with continental theological literature, and deeper consideration of biblical theology and Christology led Nevin to conclude that the popular system of the revivalists was not only defective, it was also dangerous. Later in life he wrote:

Finneyism, as it used to be called, was not to my taste; although I was slow and cautious in my judgements with regard to its exhibitions; because I made large account in fact of experimental piety, and also of religious awakenings in what I conceived to be their proper character. It was not the earnestness of the system that I disliked; but what seemed to me to be too generally the mechanical and superficial character of its earnestness. Its professional machinery, its stage dramatic way, its business like way of doing up religion in whole and short order, and then being done with it -- all made me feel that it was at best a most unreliable mode of carrying forward the work and kingdom of God. This was brought home to me with great effect especially by the wonderful revival, as it was held to be, in which the notable Kentucky operator, Mr. Gallagher, figured so conspicuously in the winter of 1835, bewitching all the Presbyterian churches in Pittsburgh for a short time, with what were little better in truth than spiritual juggleries. The condition on which he undertook the work was that pastors should have nothing to do with it, more than to meet by themselves and pray for it; while he should play *magnus Appolo* in engineering it through all the churches in his own way!.....I just got near enough to him on two or three of these occasions to be well satisfied, that so far as he himself was concerned, at least, the whole business was quackery from beginning to end; and I considered it my duty accordingly to withhold from it my sympathy and confidence altogether.²⁶

Nevin was especially appalled by Gallagher's involvement in land speculation and Gallagher's "memorable sermon on the Christian duty of making money."²⁷

By the time of his election to the faculty of the Theological Seminary of the German Reformed Church at Mercersburg in 1840, Nevin's personal acquaintance with revivalism at Union College and his later reflection on it had provided the basis for his attack in The Anxious Bench.

NEVIN AND JOHN WINEBRENNER

A second significant encounter with revivalism, specifically of the "new measures" type, also drew Nevin's criticism and played an important role in the publication of The Anxious Bench. It was his controversy with John Winebrenner, the German Reformed pastor who left the church in the 1820s to found the Church of God. In 1842 and 1843 Winebrenner and Nevin exchanged letters regarding the "new measures" which Winebrenner advocated and their tendency, in Nevin's judgment, to create sectarianism as in the case of Winebrenner's Church of God.²⁸

The correspondence between Nevin and Winebrenner was the result of an article written by Nevin in August, 1842 in which he alleged that Winebrenner's "sect especially glory in being patrons of ignorance, rail at hireling ministers, encourage all sorts of fanatical unscriptural disorder in their worship, (and substitute) their own fancies and feelings in religion for the calm deep power of faith."²⁹

In the charges and countercharges contained in the communications between the two, Winebrenner attempted to defend the formation of the Church of God and challenged Nevin's naming it a "sect." It was the German Reformed Church, Winebrenner said, which deserved the label,

because she is...a sect -- and withal a mal-practicing sect. Her mal-practices are, such as Confirmation, Infant Baptism, etc. These are other things, although unsupported by either precept or example in the Bible, are nevertheless rigidly upheld and practiced by her, whilst other things, founded on the authority of both, are discarded or opposed.³⁰

Furthermore, Winebrenner was forced to deal with Nevin's assault on the "new measures." In his letter of June 29, 1843 Nevin set out as amicably as he could his assessment of the revivalistic techniques employed by Winebrenner and his people:

You must not think that I cherish towards you any personal ill will. I think honestly, you erred in breaking away from the German Reformed Church when you did. Your acknowledged system of religion, practically considered, is to my mind, whether in your hands or in the hands of others, (for under different names it abounds in the country) radically defective and full of danger. In the fire and whirlwind system of converting sinners, I have less confidence the longer I live; I believe four are deceived by it, for every one that is saved.... Such are my views. I not utter them in the way of railing -- and it is not necessary at all that in holding them, I should hate those who like yourself think differently.³¹

In an earlier letter Nevin had been less inclined to be moderate. He referred to the "new measures" as "sheer fanaticism" and "spiritual quackery."³² Winebrenner's reply accused Nevin of being "par blind in the things of God" and bitterly stated, "if it really be so, that 'what we consider the life of religion, you hold to be sheer fanaticism,' and 'What we regard as the power of God, you are not afraid to denounce as spiritual quackery,' then may the Lord help you!"³³

Portions of the correspondence between Nevin and Winebrenner were published in the denominational newspapers of the two antagonists, each paper also publishing comments partial to its respective leader. Nevin was incensed about comments regarding the correspondence printed in the Gospel Publisher, a Church of God periodical. In a letter to the Weekly Messenger of the German Reformed Church, he expressed his anger about the manner in which he believed his views had been misrepresented and announced a forthcoming book. He wrote:

I mentioned before that I might take up the whole subject of "New Measures," in a separate publication, without direct reference to Mr. Winebrenner, or "THE CHURCH," commonly distinguished by his name. I may now add that I have prepared a tract according to this intimation which may be expected to appear under the title of the ANXIOUS BENCH, in the course of a few days.³⁴

Nevin's correspondence with Winebrenner was another spur to the publication of his famous anti-revivalist tract.

RAMSEY'S REVIVAL AT MERCERSBURG

A third confrontation with revivalism also contributed to Nevin's determination to publish The Anxious Bench.³⁵ Theodore Appel provided a narrative of the event. It took place in Mercersburg in 1842. The German Reformed Church in town was in need of revitalization. Its building was inadequate and its congregational life "forlorn." That was an especially sad state since the church was located near Marshall College and the Theological Seminary, the denomination's prominent educational institutions.

It was decided that a capable and energetic pastor should be sought to lead the Mercersburg congregation to improve its ministry and to attract more people to its membership. Accordingly, a number of experienced pastors were invited to become candidates for the position. No one indicated any interest in the pastorate until the Reverend William Ramsey, a Presbyterian from Philadelphia, agreed to conduct Sunday services and to apply for the office. Ramsey was previously a missionary to China and a seminary classmate of Nevin's at Princeton.³⁶

Ramsey's Sunday morning sermon at Mercersburg was impressive. In the evening he preached to a larger audience and sensed that he should invite "all who desired the prayers of the Church, to present themselves before the altar."³⁷ Among others, some of the most pious elderly women in the congregation responded to the invitation. There was "considerable excitement and more or less confusion" as a result of Ramsey's invitation to the altar. It was clear that he was acquainted with the "modern revival (and) religious excitement."³⁸

Nevin was present at that service and, when asked to make comment at its close, warned the audience not to confuse "outward physical exercises" with "repentance and faith in Christ, which alone could give peace."⁴⁰ While the congregation was generally disposed to elect Ramsey as their new pastor, there were a few with serious reservations. Among them was John Williamson Nevin. Nevin wrote to Ramsey expressing hope that he would accept the call, but candidly informed him that if he did accept it, he would have to relinquish his "new measures" and adopt "the catechetical system."

When Ramsey received the congregation's call, he replied that he could not accept it and cited Nevin's letter as the cause. The incident provoked much discussion and some disagreement among the members of the church and the students in the seminary. Some were confused by Nevin's

discouragement of Ramsey and Nevin's disavowal of those "measures" which they thought would advance the work and ministry of the church.⁴¹

It was an appropriate time, therefore, for Nevin to make known to the seminarians his views on the "new measures." Since at the time he was teaching a course on pastoral theology, he decided to include some lectures on revivalism. Those lectures were apparently approved by his students and any differences among them caused by the Ramsey incident were reconciled. Nevin enlarged the lectures and published them in 1843 as A Tract for the Times. The Anxious Bench.⁴² Due to the contention which this book produced in the German Reformed and other Protestant churches, Nevin issued a second edition in 1844 in which he incorporated responses to some of his critics. The analysis which follows is based on the second edition.

THE ANXIOUS BENCH

At the outset of the book Nevin stated that although the focus of his attack was the employment of the anxious bench, his broader intention was simply to use the anxious bench as characteristic of the whole system of "new measures." He wrote:

New measures, in the technical modern sense, form a particular system, involving a certain theory of religious action, and (are) characterized by a distinctive life, which is by no means difficult to understand. Of this system the Anxious Bench is a proper representative. It opens the way naturally to other forms of aberration in the same direction, and may be regarded in this view as the threshold of all that is found to follow, quite out to the extreme of fanaticism and rant.⁴³

It was the right time to inquire into the merits of the "new measures" system since, Nevin acknowledged, it had created a crisis, particularly in the Reformed churches in America. If the "new measures" system was permitted to prevail, those German churches would become considerably different from the sound traditions in which they were created and from which they had drawn their life.

Nevin admitted that assailing the "new measures" was risky because many claimed that they were helpful to religion and proceeded from the work of the Holy Spirit. Others held that if the "new measures" were not "positively helpful to the Spirit's work," there were at least harmless and tolerable.⁴⁴ That was not so, Nevin asserted.

The very design of the inquiry now proposed is to show that the Anxious Bench, and the system to which it belongs, have no claim to be considered either salutary or safe in the service of religion. It is believed that instead of promoting the cause of true vital godliness, they are adapted to hinder its progress. The whole system is considered to be full of peril for the most precious interests of the Church. And why then should there be any reserve in treating the subject with such freedom as it may seem to require?⁴⁵

It was evident that Nevin did not equate "new measures" revivalism with what he judged to be genuine, authentic and legitimate revivals of religion. Of these he observed,

They are as old as the gospel itself. Special effusions of the Spirit the Church has a right to expect in every age, in proportion as she is found faithful to God's covenant; and where such effusions take place, an extraordinary use of the ordinary means of grace will appear, as a matter of course.⁴⁶

Furthermore, certain "measures" which many deemed to be integral to the system which Nevin was criticizing, he found to be perfectly suited to increase "true vital godliness." Protracted meetings may be required, he asserted. Prayer meetings may be helpful. "Sermons and exhortations may be expected to become more earnest and pungent. A greater amount of feeling will prevail in meetings. It will become necessary to have special conferences with the awakened."⁴⁷ But these valid "revival measures" were not to be confused with the spurious "new measures."

If Finneyism and Winebrennerism, the anxious bench, revival machinery, solemn tricks for effect, decision displays at the bidding of the preacher, genuflections and prostrations in the aisle or around the altar, noise and disorder, extravagance and rant, mechanical conversions, justification by feeling rather than faith, and encouragement ministered to all fanatical impressions; if these things in the same line indefinitely, have no connection in fact with true serious religion and the cause of revivals, but only tend to bring them into discredit, let the fact be openly proclaimed.⁴⁸

The popularity and apparent success of the anxious bench, often cited by its supporters as reasons for favoring its use, were inadequate justification for its existence. "Who can behold a congregation of Christians wrestling for an altar full of penitent, anxious sinners, and witness the success of such instrumentality, and say, this is ignorance or fanaticism?" asked one patron of the anxious bench. Nevin's reply was brief and bristling:

Spurious revivals are common, and as the fruit of them false conversions lamentably abound. An Anxious Bench may be crowded where no divine influence whatever is felt. A whole congregation may be moved with excitement, and yet be losing at the very time more than is gained in a religious point of view. Hundreds may be carried through the process of anxious bench conversion, and yet their last state may be worse than the first. It will not do to point us to immediate visible effects, to appearances on the spot, or to glowing reports struck off from some heated imagination immediately after. Piles of copper, from the mint, are after all something very different from piles of gold.⁵⁰

To whom did the anxious bench appeal? Nevin answered, to "persons in whom feelings prevail over judgment and who are swayed by impulse more than reflection."⁵¹ He added, "In an enlightened, well instructed congregation the anxious bench can never be generally popular."⁵² And what about the preachers who used the anxious bench? Nevin stated, "The general habit of their lives is worldly and vain, and their religion, apart from occasional whirlwinds of excitements in which they are allowed to figure in their favorite way, may be said to be characteristically superficial and cold."⁵³ Many pastors were unfortunately tempted to view the "old forms" of religion as dead formalism. They were consequently drawn to an unending succession of "new forms" (i.e., "new measures") to awaken sinners and accomplish their conversion. Those pastors were deceived, Nevin sadly noted.

Let the power of religion be present in the soul of him who is called to serve at the altar, and no strange fire will be needed to kindle the sacrifice. He will require no new measures. His strength will appear rather in resuscitating, and clothing with their ancient force the institutions and services already established for his use. The freshness of a divine life, always young and always new, will stand forth to view in all forms that before seemed sapless and dead. Attention will be engaged; interest excited; souls drawn to the sanctuary. Sinners will be awakened and born into the family of God. Christians will be builded up in faith, and made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. Religion will grow and prosper. This is the true idea of evangelical power.⁵⁴

The "new measures" system led pastors "to undervalue and neglect the cultivation of that true inward strength without which no measures can be at last of much account. This is a great evil," Nevin wrote. The use of the anxious bench was a sign of spiritual weakness. It was nothing less than religious "quackery," one of his favorite labels for the "new measures." Nevin defined "quackery" as the "pretension to an inward virtue or power, which is not possessed in fact, on the ground of a mere show of the strength which such power or virtue is supposed to include."⁵⁶ While the "new measures" gave the outward appearance of divine power, they lacked the inward power to make them effective instruments of God.

Nevin listed four main arguments against the use of the anxious bench. First, it created "a false issue for the conscience." While the awakened sinner's mind should be consumed with the issue of repentance and yielding to God,⁵⁷ the sinner was distracted by the decision of going to the anxious bench. Second, the anxious bench obstructed "the action of truth" in the minds of the truly serious. Any genuine religious feeling was apt to be overwhelmed by the momentary excitement of coming to the bench. Calm reflection departed and concern for the outward display of approaching the bench swallowed up the essential inward desire for God's grace.⁵⁸ Third, coming to the bench created a false impression that by so doing, one had made "a real decision in favor of religion." The notion was conveyed that merely coming to the bench could make one a Christian.⁵⁹ Fourth, the anxious bench caused "harm and loss to (human) souls." The distress and excitement it generated in some was inevitably followed by a reaction of delusion and despair when the "feelings" subsided. Others

were guilty of pride and vainglory, believing they had "gotten religion" by coming to the bench, though there was little or no spiritual depth to their experience.⁶⁰

While the advocates of the anxious bench (and "new measures") cited a number of reasons for its justification, Nevin was unconvinced and sought to show the flaws in the principal arguments they offered. In his judgment there was no possible way to vindicate the bench or the system it represented. In fact, he argued, the "new measures" system was founded on a "false theory of religion."⁶¹ In the final analysis it was,

characteristically pelagian with the narrow views of the nature of sin, and confused apprehensions of the difference between flesh and spirit; involving in the end the gross and radical error that conversion is to be considered in one shape or another the product of the sinner's own will, and not truly and strictly a new creation in Christ Jesus by the power of God....The man gets religion, and so stands over it and above it in his own fancy as the owner of property in any other case. From such monstrous perversion the worst consequences may be expected to flow. The system may generate action; but it will be morbid action, one-sided, spasmodic, ever leaning toward fanaticism.⁶²

Nevin set forth a description of a system vastly superior to the system of the bench. It was altogether different from the "new measures." Included in it were "sermons full of unction and light; faithful, systematic instruction; zeal for the interests of holiness; pastoral visitation; catechetical training; due attention to order and discipline; (and) patient perseverance in the details of...ministerial work...."⁶³ He called it the "system of the catechism."⁶⁴ It was a more demanding way. "It produces actions and calls for strength to a far greater extent than the system of the bench. It is the greatest and most difficult work in the world to be a faithful minister of Jesus Christ in the spirit of this system; which might well constrain even an apostle to exclaim, Who is sufficient for these things?"⁶⁵

The system of the catechism was based on a "true theory of religion" which in Nevin's words,

carries us continually beyond the individual to the view of a far deeper and more general form of existence in which his life is represented to stand. Thus sin is not simply the offspring of a particular will, putting itself forth in the form of actual transgressions, but a wrong habit of humanity itself, a general and universal force which includes and rules the entire existence of the individual man from the very start. The disease is organic, rooted in the race, and not be overcome in any case by a force less deep and general than itself....(With regard to salvation from sin, man) is the subject of it, but not the author of it in any sense. His nature is restorable, but it can never restore itself. The restoration to be real, must begin beyond the individual...Thus humanity fallen in Adam, is made to undergo a resurrection in Christ, and so restored flows over

organically...to all in whom its life appears. The sinner is saved then by an inward living union with Christ as the bond of which he has been joined in the first instance to Adam. This union is reached and maintained through the medium of the Church by the power of the Holy Ghost. It constitutes a new life, the ground of which is not in the particular subject of it at all, but in Christ, the organic root of the Church. The particular subject lives, not properly speaking in the acts of his own will separately considered, but in the power of a vast generic life than lies wholly beyond his will, and has now begun to manifest itself through him as the law and type of his will itself as well as of his whole being. As born of the Spirit in contradistinction from the flesh he is himself spiritual, and capable of true righteousness. Thus his salvation begins, and thus it is carried forward till it becomes complete in the resurrection of the great day. From first to last it is a power which he does not so much apprehend as he is apprehended by it, and comprehended in it, and carried along with it as something infinitely more deep and vast than himself.⁶⁶

In this statement Nevin introduced some of the emphases of the Mercersburg Theology which would be developed in his subsequent published works. For the moment, however, he had set forth his objections to the anxious bench and the "new measures" and stated his preference for the "system of the catechism" as the design by which the German Reformed Church could be thoroughly and authentically renewed.

THE PERTINENCE OF THE ANXIOUS BENCH

Revivalism of the type that John Williamson Nevin attacked in The Anxious Bench has continued to be a major force in American religious life to the present moment and gives no indication of having spent its energy. While the anxious bench has virtually disappeared along with certain other features of the "new measures," the kind of religion which they represented for Nevin has persisted. Dwight L. Moody and Billy Sunday were among its more notable exponents in the later nineteenth and earlier twentieth centuries. Billy Graham and various personalities of the "electronic church" are among its more renowned apostles. They have not merely been at the forefront of an evolving professional revivalism, but have fine-tuned many of the basic techniques which Finney made popular and which have been used in turn by countless other lesser known preachers.

In his classic study of modern revivalism, William G. McLoughlin perceived some of the same weaknesses in revivalism which Nevin had discerned more than a century earlier. McLoughlin noted that,

all too often the...revivalist turned heart religion into anti-intellectualism, humility into self-righteousness, emotion into irrationality, and piety into religiosity or hypocritical posturing. He even made the process of conversion as ritualistic as the formalities of the lukewarm religion he attacked. His revival machinery was better calculated to grind out impressive statistics than to

arouse pietistic ardor. Organization and publicity produced an artificial enthusiasm, costly to generate but more costly not to. The revivalist was caught in a treadmill whose exhasuting speed he set himself. The churches which periodically endorsed him and put themselves in his more efficient hands suffered his fate, and emerged from each round of feverish activity exhausted. The temporary boost to church morale was generally followed by apathy and backsliding instead of by increased zeal and dedication.⁶⁷

In another comment with which Nevin would have fully agreed, McLoughlin remarked, "Revivals are not articles for manufacture and retail. As pietists have asserted since the beginning of Christendom, the virtues of religion cannot be organized. But vices can."⁶⁸

Nevin's The Anxious Bench sets before us two types of evangelical piety, both of which continue to struggle for our allegiance and that of those around us. His carefully considered assessment may assist us in a fresh understanding and resolution of the theological options available to us.

FOOTNOTES

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4. Hudson, 134-135.
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9. Finney, 252-259.
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17. Quoted in Bard Thompson, et al., Essays on the Heidelberg Catechism (Philadelphia: United Church Press, 1963), 54.
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21. MOL, 4-5.
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31. Kern, 69-70.
32. Kern, 64.
33. Kern, 65-66.
34. Kern, 71.
35. Appel, 316-331.
36. Appel, 316-317.
37. Appel, 317.
38. Appel, 317.
39. Appel, 317.
40. Appel, 318.
41. Appel, 320-321.
42. Appel, 321-322.
43. John Williamson Nevin, The Anxious Bench, edited by Charles Yrigoyen, Jr. and George H. Brickner, in Catholic and Reformed: Selected Theological Writings of John Williamson Nevin (Pittsburgh: The Pickwick Press, 1978), 18. This work is hereafter referred to as TAB.
44. TAB, 25.

45. TAB, 25.
46. TAB, 29.
47. TAB, 120., TAB, 27, 119.
48. TAB, 30.
49. TAB, 35.
50. TAB, 36-37.
51. TAB, 41.
52. TAB, 41.
53. TAB, 42.
54. TAB, 49-50.
55. TAB, 52.
56. TAB, 46.
57. TAB, 59-60.
58. TAB, 62-64.
59. TAB, 64-68.
60. TAB, 68-71.
61. TAB, 100.
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64. TAB, 101.
65. TAB, 117.
66. TAB, 106-107.
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EUCCHARIST/LITURGICAL RENEWAL
OR
JOHN WILLIAMSON NEVIN ON BEM E #15
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This is a particularly good time and place in which to consider Mercersburg Theology and liturgy in an ecumenical context. It is a good time because of these recent publications: Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry, Faith and Order Paper No. 111 published by the World Council of Churches, Called to Witness to the Gospel Today published by The World Alliance of Reformed Churches, and An Invitation to Action, the Lutheran-Reformed Dialogue Series III 1981-1983. These texts provide us with a truly ecumenical setting.

This is the year when some denominations are making their official responses to Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry. Presently, both the United Church of Christ and the Reformed Church in America have proposed responses drafted. These will be presented and discussed at their General Synods for approval before being sent on to Geneva. The World Alliance of Reformed Churches very early on in the study guide Called to Witness asked, "Should the Reformed churches not use this opportunity to reflect together on their understanding and to share responses with one another?"¹ The Mercersburg Society presents an extraordinary opportunity to do just that: share our responses to Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry.

The Lutheran-Reformed Dialogue and its document Invitation to Action have contributed to this sharing by, on the one hand, articulating who some of the American Reformed Churches are, and, on the other, passing on statements from churches a bit closer to home than Geneva. Howard Hageman, President of this Society, once commented, "There has to be a connection between the Congregationalists, the German Reformed and the Dutch Reformed." I believe that he is correct. The three pages describing the participants in the Lutheran-Reformed Dialogue Series III represent a first step in discovering that connection.

I am going to base my remarks on what the World Council calls "The Eucharist," The Lutheran-Reformed Dialogue, "The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper," and John Williamson Nevin named "The Mystical Presence." I will take, as my departure point, the suggestion made in the World Alliance's Call to Witness, "With regard to the Eucharist, special attention should be paid to the role of the Spirit in celebration...."²

That is a very telling and Reformed statement. We all have heard that the role of the Spirit in the Eucharist has been particularly significant for our communions from the days of Calvin. Certainly for Nevin, the Spirit is a critical element in The Mystical Presence. However, the Benedictine theologian, Kilian McDonnell, and Jesuit theologian, Edward Kilmartin, have pressed us on this very point.

The World Alliance followed up on its leading question in the Study Guide, Responding to "Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry": A Word to the Reformed Churches.

There in Question 36, the World Alliance took up BEM's paragraph E15:

It is in virtue of the living word of Christ and by the power of the Holy Spirit that the bread and wine become the sacramental signs of Christ's body and blood.³

Then they asked the succinct question:

Does this say too little - or too much? What is the role of the Spirit, and his relation to the Word, in the sacrament?⁴

The second question is the one I would like to address as being consonant with the earlier question in Called to Witness. "What is the role of the Spirit and His relation to the Word in the sacrament?" I will do so in terms of Nevin's The Mystical Presence, the Mercersburg liturgy of 1866, and the Lutheran-Reformed Dialogue Series III.

The primary issue is the issue of the real presence. Nevin wrote The Mystical Presence in part to restore the 16th Lutheran-Reformed sense of real presence. He lamented the fact that both Lutheran and Reformed communions "have seriously receded, to no inconsiderable extent, from ground on which they stood in the 16th."⁵

Therefore, I am bold to think that the Rev. Mr. Nevin would be glad to read in the Lutheran-Reformed statement:

Both Lutheran and Reformed churches affirm that Christ himself is the host at his table. Both churches affirm that Christ is truly present and received in the Supper.⁶

Moreover, he would be glad to hear the agreement reached in 1977 in the bilateral statement between the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the Roman Catholic Secretariat for Christian Unity. In Paragraph 91 of that document, Christ's Presence in Church and World, it was stated:

We gratefully acknowledge that both traditions, Reformed and Roman Catholic, hold to the belief in the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist⁷

I am sure that Nevin would be glad to hear the Reformed Churches' original affirmation of the real presence being affirmed in 20th ecumenical dialogues and statements. But I am also sure that those documents would give him pause, especially the second line in the Lutheran-Reformed statement:

Both Lutheran and Reformed churches affirm...that Christ himself is truly present and received in the Supper. Neither communion professes to explain how this is so.⁸

I am not sure he would agree that neither communion professes to explain the real presence. In fact, I think Nevin tried to explain the real presence in terms of Reformed theology beginning with Calvin. And, furthermore, in his explanation Nevin argued that his was a more

satisfactory explanation than that of the Lutheran and Roman Catholic theology he knew.

I don't say this to be belligerent or to stir up old controversies. Quite to the contrary. I mention this to move beyond the polite anti-intellectualism which has hampered the systematic theologies of so many American Protestant churches, building upon the agreements that are now in place. I think we can venture forth to articulate and discuss the adequacy of Nevin's Reformed theology of the Lord's Supper.

At this point, the Faith and Order document Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry is most helpful, particularly paragraph E15.

It is in virtue of the living word of Christ and by the power of the Holy Spirit that the bread and wine become the sacramental signs of Christ's body and blood.

I believe that the Mercersburg Theology, as set forth by Nevin in The Mystical Presence, would dare to profess how this is so. To be sure, we would never say that we can fully explain the only way this can be so. The commentary upon Paragraph E15 in BEM refers to the various attempts made "to understand the mystery of the real and unique presence of Christ in the eucharist." The second chapter of Max Thurian's book, The Mystery of the Eucharist masterfully sketches in what some of those various explanations are. We will find the Mercersburg Theology among them. To be sure, we can argue and probably undoubtedly will whether we have read Nevin aright and whether we can live with Nevin's explanation today. Of such is the Kingdom of God. Such debate and discussion is the glory of the Church. In its proposed response to BEM, the United Church of Christ recognized this breadth of interpretation of the real living and active presence within its own communion. Certainly today no one claims to have all the answers. No ecumenical theologian would claim any rational explanation exhausts the mystery at the heart of the Church.

However, that does not drive us to pious agnosticism. It does not mean we are simply to go through the motions. We are dealing with a reality to which our Reformed tradition, especially at Mercersburg, is bold to witness. Believing that Christ's presence is real in the Lord's Supper and realizing that there are many explanations of how this may be so, I would offer from the writings of Nevin a commentary on the fact that:

It is in virtue of the living word of Christ and by the power of the Holy Spirit that the bread and wine become the sacramental signs of Christ's body and blood.

I submit that there are four key phrases in this statement: "the sacramental sign," "the living word of Christ," "Christ's body and blood," and "the power of the Holy Spirit."

First, "sacramental signs."

For us, "sign" is neither a bad nor a weak word. In contemporary discussions with Roman Catholic and Anglicans where the word "symbol" is popular, it is refreshing to hear someone from the Reformed corner of the

vineyard speak up in terms of signs. We need to be careful that we do not let words like "sign" be dismissed as empty or base. The word "sign," in terms of liturgy has very deep roots in the Scripture, especially the Hebrew Scriptures. It also is a strong word in our tradition.

Nevin began his attempt to place the doctrine of the Lord's Supper in its proper scientific form by quoting the 92nd question of the Westminster Shorter Catechism, wherein a sacrament is defined in terms of signs.¹⁰

Earlier on in his argument, Nevin quoted the Scots Confession, which condemned the vanity of calling the sacraments "mere naked signs."¹¹ He invoked the Belgic Confession as well that "those signs, then, are no means vain or void."¹² Therefore, when the BEM document, paragraph 15, describes the eucharist in terms of "sacramental signs" that is more than enough for us.

These signs are not only not naked, vain or void - they are sacramental. Here Nevin and Thurian come together in a most delightful way. Nevin begins Section 24 of Chapter Three in The Mystical Presence with the sentence:

Christ communicates himself to us, in the real way now mentioned,¹³ under the form of the sacramental mystery as such.

The Mercersburg theologian is saying that the real presence of Christ is sacramental. In one of his most helpful quotations Nevin cites the English Puritan John Owen, to the effect that this sacramental presence is "peculiar," that is, distinct. This sacramental presence is, not "in the hearing of the word," nor "any other part of divine worship whatsoever."¹⁴ That quotation is a straightforward testimony to the sacramental piety of English Puritanism which Mercersburg sought to restore.

Nevin goes on to conclude Section 24 with a statement that goes right to Max Thurian. Nevin concludes that the union of the sacramental mystery "is not mechanical or local, but as the old divines say, mystical or sacramental...."¹⁵

The first thought that comes to mind is, could the title of Nevin's book have been The Sacramental Presence instead of The Mystical Presence? Are the two words, "sacramental" and "mystical" synonymous for Nevin? I think they may well be; a question worthy of study.

The second thought leads to Thurian. The commentary on Paragraph 15 of BEM states that "there have been various attempts to understand the mystery of the real and unique presence of Christ in the eucharist."¹⁶ The second chapter of Thurian's book, The Mystery of the Eucharist, delineates the different conceptions of the real presence. One of the six is what Thurian calls the "sacramental conception." Was that not the basic conception of the real presence which Nevin had in mind when he spoke of the sacramental mystery? Were not the people Thurian cites - Cyril of Jerusalem, Tertullian, Ambrose, Augustine - "the old divines"

Nevin had in mind when he spoke of the sacramental mystery? I believe so. Isn't it striking that two Reformed theologians, Nevin and Thurian, should both speak of the presence sacramentally?

It would be very fruitful for us to take up Thurian's suggestions and follow them out. When we step back for a moment, and realize "the sacramental conception" came before, what Thurian calls "the realistic conception," "the substantialist conception," and "the Conception of the Mystery of the Concomitance," you realize that Nevin may have been reaching back to the Patristic era, doing an end around the early and late Middle Ages' articulations of the real presence.

By taking up what Thurian calls "the sacramental conception," as set forth in the likes of Cyril, Tertullian or The Apostolic Constitutions, we very soon find ourselves involved in a critical discussion and definition of not only the terms, sign and symbol, but terms such as figure and type as well. You will remember that in the Biblical argument of the Mystical Presence Nevin discusses the Second Adam. There he takes up the passages in First Corinthians and Romans which speak of types.

Northrop Frye has reminded us that typology is really a mode of thought that both assumes and leads to a theory of history.¹⁸ The discussion of the sacramental in terms of types is a very fruitful discussion indeed.

Thus, Nevin's sense of the sacramental has a great deal of ecumenical potential. In terms of Nevin and Mercersburg, Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry's phrase, "sacramental signs," is firmly rooted in our tradition and filled with potential.

This brings us to "the living word of Christ."

It is in virtue of the living word of Christ and by the power of the Holy Spirit that the bread and wine become the sacramental signs of Christ's body and blood.

At this point, the third Lutheran-Reformed Dialogue's joint statement on the Lord's Supper is a genuine blessing. What is "the living word of Christ" that accompanied by the Holy Spirit's power enables the blood and wine to become the sacramental signs of Christ's body and blood? Our initial response might well be the Words of Institution. The surprise is that in our tradition, as well as the Lutheran's, that is not so. Thus, in its proposed response to BEM the United Church of Christ was concerned that Christ's presence not be rigidly associated with one particular moment. Before racing to the conclusion that this statement represents some sort of sectarian religious liberalism let loose by memorialist congregationalists who will do anything to avoid the real presence in the name of a free church polity, consider carefully the Lutheran-Reformed statement on the Lord's Supper, with special attention to Footnote 4. This footnote leads to Luther in a new way. Beginning with the importance of affirming real presence and sacramental union in both Lutheran and Reformed tradition, the note acknowledges the controversy on "the mode of Christ's presence in the sacrament."¹⁹ They then report that "in recent times scholars have approached the problems from fresh and helpful directions." As an example, the work of Lutheran scholar Regin

Prenter is cited. A professor of theology at Aarhus University, Denmark, Dr. Prenter wrote a book entitled, Spiritus Creator. If you follow the footnote to Prenter's book given in the Lutheran-Reformed dialogue, you come up with this startling statement:

...Luther's concept of the function of the sacramental Word has changed. This change consists in this, that the sacramental Word is no longer considered a special Word of₂₀ consecration but as identical with the gospel itself.

The Lutheran-Reformed Statement tells us that one of the new approaches to the debate of the mode of Christ's presence is not to speak of the living Word of Christ as a consecrating Word, but as the Word of the gospel itself. In other words, the living Word of Christ is not a formula or even the Words of Institution, but the gospel itself.

This is the basis of the protest against "magic" heard in the Lutheran-Reformed statement as well as Nevin. In a surprisingly polemical turn of phrase, the same footnote speaks of "the magic of transubstantiation."²¹ I think that the Word "magic" here refers to the idea that when the words are spoken, a change transpires. Prenter claims for Luther it doesn't work that way. The living word of Christ is the gospel itself, not a magical formula.

For Nevin, "the gospel itself" can be stated in one sentence, "The Word became Flesh."

He begins Chapter 4 of The Mystical Presence declaring:

"The Word became Flesh!" In this simple but sublime enunciation, we have the whole gospel comprehended in a word.²²

If asked to find one word that would state the whole Gospel for Nevin, I think I would choose the word "life." In the section entitled "Christianity, a Life," Nevin masterfully moves through the scriptures in a way that it would be most instructive to trace. His exegetical moves in Chapter 4, "The Biblical Argument," are beautiful. He goes from the fourth Gospel to Hebrews,²³ as well as the pastoral and Pauline epistles in a way that is marvelous. The thread that runs through those passages is "life." For those of us whose eucharistic piety is informed by Mercersburg, the Faith and Order Commission could not have chose a better adjective to describe the Word of Christ involved in the eucharist than the adjective "living."

This does not lead Mercersburg down the primrose path to Von Ogden Voqt. Nevin has too much Westminster Catechism in him for such frippery. He had a very decided doctrine of atonement necessitated by a doctrine of sin. Where Nevin does refer to the Words of Institution in Chapter Three; Section 21, he does so not as a formula to consecrate the elements of bread and wine, but as a way to accentuate the atonement. For Nevin, the telling of words in that famous pericope are not "This is," nor the word Max Thurian nuanced so well, "remembrance." For Nevin, the crucial words are "my body broken for you" and "my blood shed for the remission

of sins." We are not talking about a celebration of Jesus' life, but the body and blood of Christ "as sacrificed and slain for the sins of the world."²⁴ There never is any question but that for Nevin we "are sinners and as such need redemption." His very definition of grace taken from the 33rd question of the Shorter Westminster Catechism turns on a strong doctrine of atonement.²⁵ All of which is to say that even though for Nevin the Word of the gospel itself is "life," that in no way detracts from a strong doctrine of the atonement necessitated by sin.

Consequently, the structure and full form of a eucharistic prayer is very important for Mercersburg theology because it is in the full prayer that the Word of the gospel itself, the Word of Life, is articulated. That Word needs to be present for Christ to be present. In short, there is no magical zap that comes from certain words. That is where the proposed response of the United Church of Christ is speaking a true word when it states:

We are concerned that this presence neither be identified exclusively with the elements of bread and wine nor associated with any one particular moment in the celebration, but that Christ's presence be understood in relation to the entire eucharistic action.

Therefore, we would, I think, be pressed if the BEM section on Eucharist were read in such a way as to imply that the Words of Institution serve as a consecration formula. This would come perilously close to a "magical" mode of presence which the Lutheran-Reformed statement on the Lord's Supper rejected.

It is in virtue of the living Word of Christ...that the bread and wine become the sacramental signs of Christ's body and blood.

The living word of Christ and "the power of the Holy Spirit" that is. To the dynamic of the Holy Spirit, we now turn.

Since the days of Calvin we have been noted for our accent upon the Spirit in the eucharist. As is well known, Calvin sought to avoid an inappropriate realism in the eucharist by stressing the role of the Spirit. Kilian McDonnell understands Calvin's theology as well as anyone I know. He knew Calvin was seeking to avoid the "crassest theological materialism,"²⁶ in which God is summoned by a formula and dismissed by digestion." Certainly, Nevin shares Calvin's protest.

However, McDonnell, understanding Calvin as well as he does, asks a critical question. In the end of the day did Calvin not "use" the Spirit?

...the theology of the Spirit as applied in Calvin's sacramental theology is not ultimately satisfactory... One has the impression that in a theological embarrassing situation,²⁷ the Holy Spirit is called upon as a *deus ex machina*.

This is a significant critique and one which Nevin himself voiced.

Speaking of "one of the three points under which Calvin's theory seems particularly to labor," Nevin commented:

Bound as he (Calvin) felt himself to be to resist everything like the idea of a local presence, he found it necessary to resolve the whole process into a special supernatural agency of the Holy Spirit, as a sort of foreign medium introduced to meet the wants of the case.²⁸

Such comments give punch to the World Alliance's query, what is the relation of the Spirit to the living Word of Christ?

Here a question posed by Professor Kilmartin is helpful.³⁰ Does the Spirit have an independent mission in the economy of salvation? I think Nevin would answer, "No, it does not." I think he would say that because for Nevin the Holy Spirit is intimately identified with the person of Christ.

Nevin claimed that "the Spirit was never brought near to men before, as now through the incarnate Word."³¹ To be sure, "We read of the Spirit of God, as present and active in the world, under a certain form, before the incarnation of Christ."³² But that Nevin warned should not be confounded with the relation in which the Spirit has come to stand to the Church after the Word became flesh.

When speaking of the relation in which the Spirit stands to the Church, the resurrection is decisive. Here distinctions may be drawn between resurrection, exaltation and glorification language. Nevin turns to John 7:38-39 to point out how Christ's glorification "opened the way for the free outflowing of the Spirit."³³

That Spirit is the "very form in which Christ's life is made present in the church, for the purposes of the Christian salvation."³⁴ That Spirit cannot be sundered from the person of Christ. That Spirit is the way real communication springs from the "center of Christ's life" to "the center of ours."³⁵ Thus that Spirit is the way Christ is really present in the communion of the Lord's Supper.

This sense of the Spirit is based on Nevin's understanding of person. The Spirit is not a mechanical device nor a magical phrase. Rather, it is of the essence. The link between the person of Christ and the person of believers is by the way of the Spirit which is essential to their being.

Therefore, I think we can say that Mercersburg does not "use" the Spirit as a *deus ex machina* coming out of nowhere. The Spirit is poured out in the history of Christ and the Church. Nevin's understanding of the Spirit is too Christocentric for the Spirit to have an independent mission. The Spirit flows from the Word of the Gospel itself.

This has very real ramifications for the place of the epiklesis in a eucharistic prayer. Thurian has repeatedly observed that the epiklesis can come either before or after the Words of Institution. If it comes after the Words of Institution, as it does in most Protestant liturgies,

that signifies the Spirit completing the work of the Father and the Son. That is where it is in the Mercersburg liturgy. That is a way of saying that we know and invoke the Spirit in the context of the history of Christ and the Church. To be sure, that history goes back to the creation. But the heart of that history is in Christ's incarnation, ministry, death, glorification, resurrection, and exaltation. The Spirit is known in that history as a completion of what was there begun. Therefore, the epiklesis follows the Words of Institution not in any mechanical or marginal way of effecting or bringing about a consecration. Rather, the Spirit provides the link between Christ's life and our own.

The epiklesis of the 1866 liturgy was an original creation. Nathan Mitchell has called it "a short summary of the Mercersburg eucharistic doctrine."³⁶

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, send down, we beseech Thee, the powerful benediction of Thy Holy Spirit upon these elements of bread and wine, that being set apart now from a common to a sacred and mystical use, they may exhibit and represent to us with the effect of Body and Blood of Thy Son, Jesus Christ; so that in the use of them we may be made, through the power of the Holy Ghost, to partake really and truly of His blessed life, whereby only we can be saved from death, and raised to immortality at the last day.

There you have a Mercersburg commentary on the words in Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry's paragraph E15:

It is in virtue of the living word of Christ and by the power of the Holy Spirit that the bread and wine become the sacramental signs of Christ's body and blood.

The "sacramental signs" are the bread and wine "set apart now from a common to a sacred and mystical i.e. sacramental use." The living word of Christ speaks not only of his body and blood but of the word of the whole Gospel: He came that we might have life and that more abundantly. And our partaking "really and truly of His blessed life," "my life in Thee, Thy life in me," is by virtue of, that is, through the power of the Holy Ghost known in the Church gathered at the table.

The good news of the Word becoming flesh is founded upon a basic contrast between the world of God and the world of humanity - the light and the darkness. The incarnation bursts forth in the world and the darkness has not overcome it. Together the Word and the Spirit enable us to kindle whatsoever lights we may set upon the hills along the way.

So we sing:

Refresh Thy people on their toilsome way;
Lead us from night to everlasting day;
Fill all our lives with love and grace divine,
And glory, laud, and praise be ever Thine.

FOOTNOTES

1. The World Alliance of Reformed Churches, Called To Witness to the Gospel Today (Geneva: World Alliance, 1983), 17.
2. Ibid., 17.
3. World Council of Churches, Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry (Geneva: World Council, 1982), 13.
4. Alan P. F. Sell, Responding to "Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry A Word to the Reformed Churches" (Geneva: World Alliance, 1984), 10.
5. John W. Nevin, The Mystical Presence and other writings on the eucharist (Philadelphia: United Church Press, 1966), 28.
6. James E. Andrews and Joseph A. Burgess, editors, An Invitation To Action The Lutheran-Reformed Dialogue Series III 1981-1983 (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 14.
7. Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, "The Presence of Christ in Church and World" Information Service 45 (1981), 30.
8. Andrews and Burgess, 14.
9. World Council, 13.
10. Nevin, 176.
11. Ibid., 62
12. Ibid., 63.
13. Ibid., 181.
14. Ibid., 181-182.
15. Ibid., 182.
16. World Council, 13.
17. Max Thurain, The Mystery of the Eucharist (Grand Rapids: Eeerdman, 1984), 37.
18. Northrop Frye, The Great Code, The Bible and Literature (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1982), 80-81.
19. Andrews and Burgess, 19.
20. Regin Prenter, Spiritus Creator (Philadelphia; Muhlenberg, 1953), 138.
21. Andrews and Burgess, 19.

22. Nevin, 201.
23. Ibid., 219-225.
24. Ibid., 178.
25. Ibid., 179.
26. Kilian McDonnell O.S.B., John Calvin, the Church, and the Eucharist (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), 168.
27. Ibid., 376.
28. Nevin, 154.
29. Sell, 10.
30. Edward J. Kilmartin S.J., "The Active Role of Christ and The Holy Spirit In the Sanctification of the Eucharistic Elements" Theological Studies 45 (1984), 237.
31. Nevin, 174.
32. Ibid., 226.
33. Ibid., 229.
34. Ibid., 156.
35. Ibid., 155.
36. Nathan Mitchell, "Church, Eucharist, and Liturgical Reform at Mercersburg: 1843-1857" (Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Notre Dame, 1978), 601.

TOWARDS A COMMON EXPRESSION OF APOSTOLIC FAITH

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In the conclusion to his third article on the Apostles' Creed published in 1849 in the Mercersburg Review, John Nevin called for a return to the common catholic and apostolic faith symbolized in the Creed:

All sound doctrine and true church life, must proceed forth from a common faith there, as their only sure ground, and it is vain to dream of their being prosperously advanced in any other way....The first condition of all sound theology is, active sympathy with historical Christianity, with the idea of the Church, with the catholic mystery of the Creed....What we need... is a general hearty return to the catholic life of the Creed, as the necessary point of departure for coming to a true solution of all church questions. This we believe is something that can take place extensively long before we are able to see at all to the end of the perplexing difficulties with which we are surrounded; and that must take place, indeed, before a single step can be successfully made towards their proper practical resolution.

Dare we believe that Nevin's call is materializing in the present project of the World Council of Churches which summons the churches to a recognition, explication, and confession of the common apostolic faith?

I think we may engage in the cautious hope that such is the case. Contemporary documents such as Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry, The COCU Consensus, and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches's Called To Witness and Confessing and Confessions In the Reformed Tradition Today appeal to a recovery, recognition, and confession of the apostolic faith.

This may be a sign that the Church's struggle and quest for "visible unity in one faith and in eucharistic fellowship expressed in worship and in common life in Christ...in order that the world may believe"² is realizing a new state of maturation. We dare entertain the cautious hope that the call for a "Common Expression Of The Apostolic Faith" is a sign - a sign that unity shall be sought, in the words of Nevin, "not as something which results first from the thought and purpose of the vast membership of which it (the Church) is composed," but will arise out of the "ground out of which the membership itself springs, and in which perpetually it stands, and from which it must derive evermore all its harmony, and stability, and activity, and strength."³

I use the phrase "cautious hope" purposely. The very direction and focus of the World Council's project will determine whether or not we hope in vain. The conditions are pregnant with possibility as well as with danger.

In this introduction, let us consider (a) the nature of the Apostolic

Faith project, (b) the possibility and danger alive within the project, and (c) insights we may receive from Mercersburg.

THE APOSTOLIC FAITH PROJECT

The Apostolic Faith project and growing convergence in our understanding of baptism, eucharist, and ministry are part of the World Council's effort to fulfill its purpose of calling the church to the goal of visible unity. The roots of this Apostolic Faith project are found in the first meeting of Faith and Order which reported in 1927:

Notwithstanding the differences in doctrine among us, we are united in a common Christian Faith which is proclaimed in the Holy Scriptures and is witnessed to and safeguarded in the Ecumenical Creed, commonly called the Nicene, and in the Apostles' Creed, which Faith is continuously confirmed in the spiritual experience of the Church of Christ.⁴

Geoffrey Wainwright suggests that this is ideal language which looks forward to the time "when we shall be able to confess with one mind and one voice the common scriptural faith to which the classical symbols of the church bear testimony."⁵ The actualization of this ideal, he suggests, has been underlying the work of Faith and Order from its inception. The present project is a response to the 1975 Nairobi Assembly of the WCC which called on the churches to "undertake a common effort to receive, reappropriate, and confess together, as contemporary occasion requires, the Christian faith and truth, delivered through the apostles and handed down through the centuries."⁶

The project began to take shape through a series of meetings. In June, 1978 a Working Group from the World Council and Roman Catholic Church met in Venice and produced the document Towards a Confession of the Common Faith. In August, 1978, the Faith and Order Commission meeting in Bangalore wrestled with the starting point of the study: should it be the classical creeds or the life issues of today? It was concluded that the two sets of data need to be mutually illuminating and the scriptural base or reference for the study should be Ephesians 1:3-14. The title for the project emerged from the January, 1981 meeting in France; while the 1981 meeting at the Orthodox Center outside of Geneva decided that the study should focus upon the original Greek text of the Nicene Creed as the Ecumenical Symbol of the apostolic faith. A consultation in Odessa, Russia, in October, 1981 raised the question of the relationship between the Scriptures and the Nicene Creed. The Commission's meeting in Lima in 1982 reformulated the Nairobi mandate and outlined the three major steps: recognition, explication, and confession. The Lima working group reported:

We are convinced that any real progress among the divided churches toward the common expression of the apostolic faith today will require a twofold movement, towards unity in faith with the early Church, and toward unity in mission with the Church of the future. The word "towards" is important; both movements are actually, from our present divided situation, movements towards the future. Our hope

then is that we can initiate a threefold study project, aiming:

- a) to ask the churches to make a common recognition of apostolic faith as expressed in the Ecumenical Symbol of that faith: the Nicene Creed;
- b) to ask the churches how they understand its content today in their own particular situations of worship, fellowship and witness; and
- c) to ask the churches "to undertake a common effort to confess together, as contemporary occasion requires, the Christian truth and faith, delivered through the Apostles and handed down through the centuries".

We believe that this project will guide the churches to confess Christ in their life, and lead them towards the common celebration of the eucharist where "we proclaim the Lord's death until he comes" (I Cor. 11:26).

The October, 1983 meeting in Rome of the working group produced a fourfold working method:

1. The exegetical task of determining by means of the scriptural witness the Christian faith concerning God, Christ, the Spirit, the Church, the present life of believers, and the world to come;
2. The historical task of tracing how and why that faith came to find expression in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, and of determining the relations between the Creed and other formulations of the faith;
3. The hermeneutical task of reading scriptures and Creed in our present situations in such ways that the one faith may illuminate our contemporary world; and
4. The ecumenically constructive task of finding means and forms by which the faith may be confessed in praise before God and in witness before our fellow human beings.

What is envisaged is not the creation of a new Creed, but "a common frame of reference - including Scripture, tradition, and basic creedal elements - which, within this comprehensive framework, will help us to acknowledge the common ground of apostolic faith" in contemporary confessions, worship, life and witness. The Ecumenical Symbol becomes the standard testimony which directs us to the source of our faith from which all commonality and unity flow. The study project looks forward to a Council of Reconciliation which would be a preparation for a truly ecumenical Council of the whole Church in the future.

POSSIBILITY AND DANGER

The possibility which produces "cautious hope" in us is the possibility that the recognition, explication, and confession of the apostolic faith will direct the Church to the very source from which all Christian faith, life, celebration and witness flow. Thus the hope exists that this project will direct the church to the ontological source of unity: the new Creation, - the Word made flesh.

In recognizing the Nicene Creed as the ecumenical symbol of the apostolic faith, the Church needs to ask: What is the apostolic faith? Where does it originate? How is it expressed, shared, experienced, celebrated? How is this communicated through the ages? Recognition and explication of the apostolic faith involves all that the ecumenical creeds set forth and more!

It is precisely at this point that we discover the possibility and danger. The apostolic faith project offers the hope that the Church will be directed from the letter to the spirit, from the external to the internal, from the form to the substance, from the surface or verbal witness to the very heart and source of her faith and life.

On the other hand, the danger exists that the Church will fix upon the external, the form, the letter, the surface and accept formulas and propositions in place of life-giving faith. In doing so, the Church would miss the very opportunity this project affords.

Mercersburg offers insight at this point. Nevin and Schaff insisted that a balance must be maintained and that the breaking of such balance was cause for the abuses and distortions in the faith and Church.

Nevin understood the Apostles' Creed to be the external symbol of the conscious and immediate response of the Apostles and the Apostolic Church to the fact of the Incarnation, the Word made flesh! Recovery, recognition, and explication of the apostolic faith directs us to this ontological reality.

Nichols points to this in his introduction to Nevin's conclusion to the three articles on the Apostles' Creed and crowns his point by directing us to a Latin motto from Anselm which is printed on the cover of the Mercersburg Review:

Most of Nevin's opponents...held a view of revelation as a body of "truth received on testimony" - propositions whose authority was external....For Nevin this contention was a form of rationalism....For him the content of revelation was no body of propositions, but God, his "being, and presence, and glory." A revelation demonstrated by rational arguments was not revelation. "Jesus Christ authenticates himself." Faith was less an assent to propositions and arguments than it was a recognition, analogous to sense experience, of the divine reality. The motto on the cover of The Mercersburg Review came from Anselm: "Neque enim quaero intelligere ut credam, sed credo ut intelligam (For

I do not seek to know that I may believe, but I believe that I may understand)."¹²

The direction and substance of the World Council's project will determine whether or not the balance is maintained and our hopes are realized or shattered. The struggle is already at hand.

The danger of unbalance is seen in the cries of those who dismiss the project as a short-sighted retreat into classical formulas and doctrines not related to the third and fourth worlds, the women's movement, nuclear threat, and the issues of justice and peace. One United Church of Christ Conference Minister has suggested that he feels these concerns are ignored and that the ecumenical focus upon BEM and apostolic faith is a rehash of classical formulas which could produce a union he likened to dinosaurs coming together only to die in the same tar pit.

Hope bursts forth in the signs of those who wrestle with language issues to move beyond the limits of language, and those who see the project directing us beyond written statements. Hans-Georg Link writes:

the "expression" of faith to which the title of the study refers is not limited to written statements: it also includes spoken words and action, the content of what is confessed just as much as the act of confessing itself. Acts of worship and the situations in which people live their daily lives are¹³ all part of the "expression" of the apostolic faith.

Hope is to be found in the directions to which the literature points. Faith and Order Paper 100: Towards A Confession of the Common Faith states that the call to a common confession is a return to the source, Christ Himself, and

implies a special insistence on the connection between Christian salvation and the realization in our world of a state of justice and peace, abolishing discriminations and thus announcing the reign of God inaugurated in Jesus....The confession of Christ through action is, in fact, the logical outcome of adherence to the fundamental articles¹⁴ of faith in God the Creator and in the Incarnation.

Hope is also seen in the other project of the World Council - Unity of the Church and the Renewal of the Human Community - which places the classical concern for unity on a broadened horizon with a specific assignment: "to work out the implications of Christian unity in relation to some of the most critical challenges confronting us in the broken communities of the world."¹⁵

INSIGHTS FROM MERCERSBURG

As the Church continues her quest for visible unity and engages in the process which leads to consensus and a common expression of apostolic faith, the teachings of Mercersburg provide helpful insights and deserve

our attention. The themes of Mercersburg Theology sound like the ecumenical agenda and promise to point us in the right direction.

The controlling principles of the Incarnation and the historical development of this new creation through the Church speak directly to the task at hand, for they teach us the fact that true unity rests within and is actualized from the very root and origin of the church.

True unity is not a product of merger or verbal formulation, but the result of the development of the common life and ground of the church, the Word made Flesh, Christ himself. Nevin and Schaff looked to the historical development of the Church of the future which would produce a reconciliation of Protestantism and Catholicism in an evangelical Catholic church. It was faith in this future of the Church, as Nichols indicates, that Nevin and Schaff were enabled to "put up with the imperfections in the present which would otherwise have been unendurable."¹⁶

The ontological implications of the Incarnation are realized and experienced through the Church. They are celebrated and realized in the Liturgy and Sacraments. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Mercersburg Theology produced a liturgical tradition which stands in communion with the Church catholic and through which the catholic and apostolic faith and life is confessed, celebrated, and communicated. I wonder if Nichols fully understands the implication of his low-key observation:

The spirit of the movement survived mainly in the liturgy it had molded. The Order of Worship embodied a sense of continuity at once with the Reformation and with ancient Catholicism, along with the characteristic views of its compilers concerning Church, ministry, sacraments. In some congregations it remains to this day the vehicle of a living tradition.¹⁷

This "living tradition" teaches and celebrates the fact that the Church originates in the Incarnation and is the historical continuation of the life of Jesus Christ. It is through the church that the "new creation which revealed itself originally in (Christ's) person is here made a constant among (us), with all its resources, as a real historical process, reaching forward to the end of time."¹⁸ The event of the Incarnation flows over from Christ to his people. It involves a mystical union. Christ lives in the Church and through the Church in its particular members.¹⁹ In the Mystical Presence, Nevin wrote "we do not simply bear his name, and acknowledge his doctrine. We are so united with him as to have part in the substance of his life itself."²⁰ In "Catholic Unity," he wrote, "whatever the Church becomes in the way of development, it can never be more in fact than it was in him from the beginning....The unity of the Church, then is the cardinal truth in the Christian system....We are not Christians, each one by himself and for himself, but we become such through the Church. Christ lives in his people, by the life which he fills his Body, the Church, and they are necessarily one before they can be many."²¹

This sense of Church and the relationship between Christ and the

Church, Nevin maintained, is what we confess in the Creed. And the Creed is "no summary of Christian doctrine primarily for the understanding."²² It is "what the Universal Church in past ages held it to be, the one only true radix and ground type of Christian faith and doctrine."²³ It is symbol of the apostolic witness to the fact of Christianity; the "necessary form of the gospel, as this is first apprehended by faith; a direct transcript, we may say, of what the gospel is to the contemplation of the believer, turned wholly upon the Person of Christ."²⁴ Allegiance to the Creed for Nevin was not subscription to rationalized doctrine, but communion with the apostolic witness and the catholic Church through the ages.

The Creed directs us to the source of our life and unity. It is not surprising that the heirs of Mercersburg should look to the ecumenical developments with hope and wonder whether the tasks at hand might bring recovery and progress as the Church seeks to actualize in visible unity her catholic and apostolic faith and life.

The first step in the apostolic faith projects calls us to a common recognition of the apostolic faith as expressed in the ecumenical symbol. Let us turn our attention to a closer examination of Nevin's recognition.

FOOTNOTES

1. John Williamson Nevin, "The Apostles' Creed", Mercersburg Review, Vol. I, 1849, pp. 344-346.
2. "Report of The Working Group," Towards Visible Unity, Commission on Faith and Order, Lima, 1982, Vol. II, Faith and Order Paper, No. 113 (Geneva: WCC), p. 28.
3. Nevin, "Catholic Unity," The Mercersburg Theology, James H. Nichols, ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 36.
4. Geoffrey Wainwright, "Reception of BEM and The Apostolic Faith Study," The Search for Visible Unity, Jeffrey Gros, ed., (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1984), p. 28.
5. Ibid., p. 28.
6. Hans-Georg Link, "Staff Report," Towards Visible Unity, p. 3.
7. Cf. Wainwright, Op. Cit., pp. 72-73; Hans-Georg Link, "Confessing Faith Together: Not Just a Matter of Words;" and E. Glenn Hinson, "Towards A Common Expression of Apostolic Faith."
8. "Report of The Working Group," op. cit., p. 32.
9. Wainwright, op. cit., pp. 75-76.
10. Hans-Georg Link, op. cit., p. 10.
11. Cf. Towards A Confession Of The Common Faith, Faith and Order Paper 100, (Geneva: WCC, 1980), pp. 10-13.
12. James H. Nichols, ed., The Mercersburg Theology (New York, Oxford University Press: 1966), pp. 308-309.
13. Hans-Georg Link, op. cit., p. 10.
14. Towards A Confession Of The Common Faith, op. cit., p. 10.
15. "Report of The Working Group, Towards Visible Unity, Part 2, op. cit., p. 134.
16. Nichols. op. cit., p. 28.
17. Ibid., p. 10.
18. Nevin, "The Church," op. cit., pp. 65-66.
19. Nevin, The Anxious Bench, (Chamberburg, 1844, 2nd ed.), pp. 125-126.
20. Nevin, The Mystical Presence, (Philadelphia: SR. Fisher & Co., 1867), p. 218.
21. Nevin, "Catholic Unity," Mercersburg Theology, pp. 40-41.

22. Nevin, "Theology of the New Liturgy," Mercersburg Review, 1867, p. 34.
23. Ibid., p. 48.
24. Ibid., p. 35.

TOWARDS A COMMON EXPRESSION OF THE APOSTOLIC FAITH:
NEVIN'S RECOGNITION

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When attempting to describe John Williamson Nevin, the "Master of Mercersburg," many vivid adjectives come to mind. I would speculate, however, that neither friend nor foe, historian nor contemporary, would dare characterize Nevin as indecisive or wishy-washy. Yet, if he were asked whether or not the Apostles' Creed was apostolic in heritage, he would respond unequivocally with a yes and a no.

The Apostles' Creed was not apostolic (according to Nevin) in the sense that it was penned by one or all of the Twelve. As an early practitioner of historical criticism, Nevin acknowledged that the Creed was probably a fifth century production. He was not to be influenced by folklore or popular wishful thinking.

Nevertheless, Nevin believed in the Creed. The Apostles' Creed is of the Apostles fully and genuinely to the extent that it was in essence fashioned under the hands of the Disciples; fashioned in the sense that this document evolved as the symbol of the unchanging faith from Christianity's very beginning.¹ The Apostles' Creed (hereafter referred to as the Creed) is the very substance of the Christian faith transformed into concrete words. Its origin is² in the earliest Christian community. It is historical and divine in form.

Nevin would agree that the structure of the Creed as it is known to us today did not crystalize until the fifth century. Yet, he would argue that it is possible to trace this same kernel of faith which has always been intact. When discussing the distinctive Roman Creed, he states that this symbol was not indigenous to the Roman world: "We meet it not in the Fourth century, as a new thing; the creation possibly only of that age, or the one going before; it is the old baptismal symbol, as all the world."³ Evidence of this "kernel" can be found in the writings of Cyprian when he speaks of a common creed in the sacrament of African baptism. It can be detected in Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Origen who all refer to a "Christian Rule" when seeking to justify a theological position. Thus, from the apostolic time, we can find a continuous evangelical tradition which in⁴ essence has always been in agreement with later creedal development. Never have articles of the Creed been in conflict. Nowhere can we identify interior disagreement. The Creed is not a result of trial and error, but is rather the organic growth of faith's substance.

Certainly history reveals definite additions. Without a doubt we can tabulate numerous written versions, but because the essence of the Creed is divine. It is immutable, regardless of any changes of expression. It has always been complete in itself. It has always been a unit. It⁵ has always represented the dignity and authority of the apostolic witness.

The Creed is not based on the scriptures. It predates the Gospels and the Epistles. Its origin comes not from the account of the faith, but

from Christianity itself. Between the two there is no rivalry. In fact, the Creed interprets the Bible and the Bible interprets the Creed. The Bible is not to be worshipped. Unlike some popular opinions, it is not the rock of our faith. The only true basis is the person of Christ, and it is directly from the Incarnation that the Apostles' Creed stems.⁶

Let us delve a little deeper to discover what Nevin means. The Creed is not a lot of things. It is not a theory of religion. A Creed is not a catechism, or a summary of Christian Doctrine. Neither is it what we think of as a private confession, for it is not the result of an intellectual process or of personal reflection. The Creed was not cranked out by one incredibly precocious person as was the Declaration of Independence created by Thomas Jefferson.⁸ On the other hand, it was not the consensus of a committee, a world council or a convention. There is no proof, no date, no means of pinning down its origin. For Nevin, this fact was a strength and not a weakness. It led him to his conclusion of what the Creed really is. It is not sent to us by God in stone (as we sometimes envision Moses' Sinai tablets), and was not divinely imposed. It is a "spontaneous witness" to the theophany; a reaction to a presence surely known.⁹ That's what faith is. Faith is the ability to perceive those things unseen. It is true and certain knowledge and trust of God's reality.¹⁰ In a way, faith is to the pneumatic as our five senses are to the world of the concrete. Faith, like sensory perception, needs no intermediary.

Consider this example. Dinosaurs are extinct. Yet by scientific research we can be sure that dinosaurs were once a part of the earth's reality. We can tract their footprints. We can collect their bones. With the help of research and artists we can get a pretty good idea of their habits, their size, their skin tones. We can process all the evidence intellectually and be sure of their prehistoric existence. Thus, we can say we believe in dinosaurs. Belief differs from experience, however, as when we look at a table, or taste a cool drink. Our senses enable us instantly to apprehend without any previous rational processing. We know that the table is real. We can touch. We can see.

Faith, according to Nevin, can be more easily likened to sensation than it can be to belief. For faith is the ability to apprehend the supernatural instantaneously.

What then does this have to do with the Apostles' Creed? According to Nevin, everything. The Creed of the Apostles, along with the great catholic creeds, is faith in its pure, simple, unadulterated form. It is not mere belief. It begins with the Incarnation, the presence of Christ, the Word becomes Flesh, God materialized. It captures in the form of words both the human and the divine essence of our Blessed Lord. Faith is the means by which we are able to recognize in Jesus, the Christ. The utterance of that faith is contained in the Creed.

The confession of Peter is the first place we can see the Creed take shape.¹² Peter's conviction that "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God" was not reached by what he could deduct, surmise, hear or see. Others could see Jesus as clearly as he. Peter's confession is not a theological dissertation. It is a compulsive, overwhelming response to

Christ's presence. It is enlightenment. It is awareness of a glorious reality. By the gift of faith, Christ was perceived. "For," Jesus said, "flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father, who is in heaven."¹³ Faith is not concocted. It is received.

Nevin's understanding of Peter and the rock, I find extremely interesting. He contends that it was not the person of Peter that Jesus referred to as the rock and upon which He intended to build his Church, but the rock was Peter's confession. It was perception of the Incarnation, i.e. the Creed. From this point flows¹⁴ all aspects of the Christian life and all forms of Christian theology. Although, within time, Peter was sure to grow in his understanding, as well as his ability to grasp the divine, his initial confession was "in its own nature universal and complete."¹⁵ The truth in Peter's confession is not lessened by the later development of the Creed.

Out of the fact of the Incarnation grows our apprehension of the Trinity. It is through our meeting with God the Son that our exposure to God the Creator and God the Spirit gains true dimension. This is not to say that the Second Person of the Trinity predates or has greater standing among the Three. It does affirm, however, that through Christ we come to experience revelation more perfectly. For we will only know the love of God when we can know God personally. Christ's baptismal formula (found in Matthew 28:19), therefore, is the logical outgrowth of the Incarnational reality. And each of these articles, while sufficiently complete in itself, cannot be taken separately.¹⁶

The Creed as we have received it today is the orderly outgrowth of the incarnational reality, of the confession of Peter, of the baptismal decree. Because it is founded in the Incarnation, it is not just any theological document. It is historical. It is spatial. It is growing. Because it is founded in the Incarnation of Christ it is sacramental, catholic and perfect.¹⁷

One of the issues facing the nineteenth century Church, which indeed is still being raised today, is: Is this symbol outdated, restrictive or limited at least in some of its terminology and articles? To this accusation¹⁸ Nevin would bristle and say, "The Creed can't be improved or altered." It must be one not many. Every article is a truth unto itself. You don't tamper with the perfect. Yet our ability to digest its meaning can continually explode and grow. That doesn't mean that the Creed says everything there is to say about Christianity. It doesn't mention the doctrine of justification, the inspiration of the scriptures, or a thing about Jesus' words and work, and personality. Nevin would assure us that's O.K. For the purpose of the Creed is not to expalin (like a catechism). It is not the same as doctrine whereby we try to adapt the divine to human reason. It states what we believe, not so much how or why. In its brevity, it gives all that is necessary. Its purpose is to bring¹⁹ Christ and Christianity into consciousness; to kindle faith, from faith.

So far we have discussed only the Apostles' Creed for that was the king of all creeds, according to Nevin. He did, however, give high regard to the Nicene Creed and the Athanasian. As far as Nevin was concerned

these three were the great ecumenical creeds worthy of our adoration. He even went so far as to admit all three convey the Apostolic tradition. Nevin writes:

The title indeed, was by no means confined originally to this particular symbol as distinguished from others; but was applied frequently also to other symbols, that of Nice for instance, that of Constantinople, and the Creed; since with all their differences they were regarded as alike embodying and representing in a true form, the one Catholic faith of the church as it had been handed down from the Apostles.²⁰

In these various creeds Nevin discovered the same substance of the same faith exhibited in the same general form. This consistency in their basic makeup was seen by Nevin as a strong argument for the apostolic seed and the catholicity of the faith.²¹ Unlike the Apostles' Creed, however, Nevin acknowledged the formation of the Nicene Creed in history. He believed it was a conglomeration of confessions from the East which was elaborated to combat the heresy of Arius.²² Perhaps he would have agreed with T. G. Apple who believed the symbol of Nicea pushed the definition of creed to the brink. In spots,²³ the symbol of Nicea appears to be less like creed and more like doctrine.

Outside of these catholic creeds, Nevin viewed creedal innovation cautiously. He would be the first to assert that the creed is vital and growing. This growth occurs, however, out of one central truth not by accumulation. The form we now use, though, has reached a point of stability. Lest we be deceived, "its stability was not in the outward letter, so much as in the inward spirit. It was written and preserved as one of the fathers (Jerome) expresses it, not on plates of metal or stone but on flesh tables of the heart, by the Spirit of the living God."²⁴

Acceptance of the Creed will not stifle our taste for theology. On the contrary, it should encourage the quest so long as we always begin with the Creed as the root, the permanent radix. Acceptance of the Creed will not box in Christian freedom. The Creed is the springboard to innumerable possibilities and expressions.²⁵ The Creed doesn't preclude the dynamism of the Spirit. It helps us to identify and interpret it.²⁶

For John Williamson Nevin, therefore, the Creed is the banner of the faith, the standard testimony, the answer for Churches seeking unity. Had the Reformers ignored the Creed they would have thrown out the baby with the bath water (so to speak). But they didn't. They sought to formulate no new religion. Their efforts were to uncover the faith that for years had been drenched in garbage.²⁷ Nevin ordered his priorities when he declared to the first General Synod of the German Reformed Church in 1863, "Our confessionalism starts not in the sixteenth century, but in the first, not in the Heidelberg Catechism, but in the Apostles' Creed."²⁸

Can Nevin help us in our goal of "Confessing the Apostolic Faith today?" The issues raised bare some amazing similarities. All seem to understand that a common confession is imperative to unity. All believe our search must center in a great ecumenical creed.²⁹ (Though no one seeks to bind the church to its letter or cultural idiosyncracies.). No

camp has an interest in developing a new and independent expression of the faith. And all are committed to seeing the symbol explicated in service, liturgy, and sacraments.³⁰

Of course the most striking difference between Mercersburg and the World Council's direction is in its choice of creed. While the World Council study has focused on the Nicene - Constantinopolitan Creed claiming that it is accepted³¹ most universally, Nevin definitely prefers the simpler Apostles' Creed. Also, we find some variance in understanding of creed and scriptural relations. Nevin credits the Creed with existing prior to the New Testament.

One helpful tip I believe we can glean from Mercersburg is the distinction made between doctrine and creed. It allows us to zero in on the essence of our faith without getting roadblocked by human diversity.

Of course the most hopeful aspect of this study for me has been sighting the optimism of John Williamson Nevin. Even though he lived in the fire of rampant sectarianism, Nevin was sure unity was³³ possible, yea even probable, if the Church grounded herself in the Creed. Could it be that the work of COCU, the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the World Council of Churches project indicate the first step towards realizing the Mercersburg dream? We pray that the "visible catholic,³⁴ historical, and life bearing Church" may some day soon be a reality.

FOOTNOTES

1. Nevin, The Mercersburg Review, Volume 1, published by the Alumni of Marshall College (Mercersburg, PA: H. A. Misch, 1849) p. 110.
2. Ibid., p. 217.
3. Ibid., p. 117.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid., p. 109.
6. Ibid., p. 338.
7. Ibid., p. 204.
8. Ibid., p. 203.
9. Ibid., p. 214.
10. The Heidelberg Catechism, Question #21.
11. Nevin, The Mercersburg Review, 1849, p. 210.
12. Matthew 16:16
13. Matthew 16:17
14. Nevin, The Mercersburg Review, 1849, p. 317.
15. Ibid., p. 316.
16. Ibid., p. 323.
17. Ibid., p. 600.
18. Ibid., p. 336.
19. Ibid., p. 111.
20. Ibid., p. 108.
21. Nevin, "Christ and Him Crucified" A Concio Ad Clerum, Preached in Grace Church, Pittsburgh, November 18, 1863, at the opening of the First General Synod of the German Reformed Church in America; (Pittsburgh: McMillan Steam Printer, 1863) p. 25.
22. Nevin, The Mercersburg Review, 1849, p. 120.
23. Apple, The Mercersburg Review, Volume XXIV T. G. Apple ed. (Philadelphia: Reformed Church Publishing Board, 1877) p. 109.

24. Nevin, The Mercersburg Review, 1849, p. 110.
25. Ibid., p. 340.
26. Ibid., p. 597.
27. Nevin, The Mercersburg Review, 1849, p. 122.
28. Nevin, "Christ and Him Crucified," p. 27.
29. "Report of the Worship Group," Towards Visible Unity, Commission on Faith and Order, Lima 1982, Vol. II; Faith and Order Paper No. 113. (Geneva, WCC) p. 42.
30. Geoffry Wainwright, "Reception of BEM and the Apostolic Faith Study," The Search for Visible Unity, Jeffry Gros, ed., (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1984) p. 30.
31. E. Glen Hinson, Towards a Common Confession of the Apostolic Faith Today, p. 1.
32. "Report of the Working Group," p. 42.
33. Nevin, The Mercersburg Review, 1849, p. 344.
34. James Hastings Nichols, Romanticism in American Theology, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961) p. 67.

THE IMPORTANCE OF LITURGICAL STUDIES IN THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

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Some would say Liturgical Studies have no importance whatever. Professor F. C. Burkitt of Cambridge wrote, "It is still believed in certain circles that Liturgiology is a proper study only for those possessed of a sacristy mind." This accusation suggests there is a closet effeminacy in those whose immature delight it is to dress up in imposing vestments, to scatter incense like leaves before the north wind, to play with anachronistic candles, and to cross themselves as if they had been attacked by a bevy of witches. Sometimes the critics of liturgiology suggest that it is a study subject to triviality and pomposity. My distinguished teacher, Professor E. C. Ratcliff, was frequently in demand as a liturgical adviser in South India as well as in the United Kingdom, but when he was asked for liturgical guidance for some pompous episcopal function in the Church of England, he replied, "liturgy, not Circus, is my subject."¹

You may even be surprised to learn that Dean Inge, Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral in London, and himself a great mystic, when asked if he studied liturgiology answered, "No; nor do I collect postage stamps." The assumption was that both were totally irrelevant studies and the obsession of the small-minded. His diary also records that after he had spent several hours conducting worship in the cathedral on the same day, he confided, "I have held different views at different times about the character and nature of the Creator of the Universe; but never at any time have I thought it at all probable that He is the kind of person who enjoys being serenaded."²

Perhaps the most far-reaching criticism of liturgics has emerged in the English-speaking part of the world from those denominations in England who were historically excluded from the national Church of the land because they believed that the Book of Common Prayer was not in all points in accordance with the Biblical criterion, and although they were faithful ministers, yet were hauled into prison or forced to escape to Holland or New England where they could practice extemporary prayers under the direct guidance of the Holy Spirit following Romans 8:26, "We do not even know how we ought to pray, but through our inarticulate groans the Spirit himself is pleading for us..." (N.E.B.). The Puritans, as recorded in my The Worship of the English Puritans (1948), elaborated no less than five important arguments against liturgies and set prayers. First, this deprived both ministers and people from the opportunity of creating their own prayers. Secondly, no liturgy could meet the different needs of varying congregations and occasions. Thirdly, to insist upon set forms as the only acceptable way of worshipping God was to equate human decisions with Divine imperatives. Fourthly, set prayers lead to hypocrisy for either familiarity breeds contempt or leads to mere lip service where we speak what we do not feel. The fifth and final charge against liturgies is that their imposition has brought persecution in its train. Certainly, it cost Presbyterian, Congregationalist, as well as Baptist ministers

their livings in the seventeenth century, and Methodists their's in the eighteenth century in England, while creating the so-called "Free Church" tradition which until recently, has equated a set liturgy with insincerity.

How in the face of such criticisms as I have mentioned - the charges of immaturity, triviality, pomposity, and insincerity as well as Biblical infidelity - can we make a case out fore the importance of liturgiology in Theological education? One could, of course, answer that the very listing of such charges is itself an example of studying the history of liturgy, but what is wanted is a finer appreciation of the aims and rewards of Liturgical Studies. One could point out that some of the finest defenders of extemporaneous prayer have, in fact, created famous prayers and even books of prayers, such as George Reynolds, a Presbyterian minister who, at the Restoration was appointed Bishop of Norwich and in 1662 wrote the superb General Thanksgiving in the Book of Common Prayer with its succinct summaries, blessing Almighty God for "our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life" and giving gratitude "for the means of grace and the hope of glory" and answering the very criticism of insincerity by begging "that we show forth thy praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives." We cannot forget either that John Hunter, an English Congregational minister published Devotional Services for Public Worship in 1882 which called for a tenth revised edition in 1920, and that an English Presbyterian minister, Dr. W. E. Orchard, produced his fine book, Divine Service in 1919.

I

In this presentation, however, I want to make some larger claims for the central role of the study of liturgics in our seminaries. I will begin with a very modest, even mediocre claim. If a sermon occupies no more than a third of a service of Divine worship, and liturgy takes up the rest of the time, why, in theological seminaries is so much more time given to homiletics (not to mention Biblical interpretation and systematic theology, all subservient to sermon production) than to liturgics? And in this calculation I am omitting such special services as the Sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist, and occasional services such as Confirmation, Weddings, and Funerals. This, of itself, argues that far more time should be spent in Protestant seminaries on Liturgics than is at present the case.

II

Let me move to higher ground to provide further arguments for the role of Liturgics. My second argument is, therefore, the maturity which the discipline of liturgiology has now attained. To make the point I need only refer to the masterworks now available in this field produced by Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican, and Protestant scholars. The Catholic Josef Jungmann's chef-d'oeuvre appeared in English translation from 1951-55 in two substantial volumes as The Mass of the Roman Rite, and a fellow Jesuit Vaggagini produced the influential Theological Dimensions of the Liturgy in 1959. Alexander Schmemmann, the Eastern Orthodox scholar, published his Introduction to Liturgical Theology in 1966, while the superb Lutheran bishop Yngve Briliottz made an ecumenical contribution to

liturgiology by his masterful study of Holy Communion as early as 1930 in the book, Eucharist Faith and Practice - Catholic and Evangelical. It was a study of the various ways the Eucharist had been interpreted through the Christian centuries, and this I shall refer to later in greater detail. Major Anglican contributions to our study have been made by Dom Gregory Dix in The Shape of the Liturgy (1948) which argued that the four basic actions were more important than the varying interpretations given to them historically, and A. G. Herbert's Liturgy and Society: The Function of the Church in the Modern World (1935). This argued that the Church in her liturgy was living out her theology and at the same time renewing her spirituality. It included the claim that the Church was expressing the will of God in a redeemed society which had already transcended in principle and partly in reality the divisions of race, nationality, class, sexuality, and politics that tear the outside world asunder, and was commissioned to demonstrate this integrating life in the world. This was no merely antiquarian or aesthetic approach. Other Anglican writings of note were Evelyn Underhill's Worship and J. Gordon Davies's studies of liturgy and architecture, ancient and contemporary.

The two leading Continental Reformed students of liturgiology in our day have been J. J. Von Allmen with his magisterial study, Worship its Theology and Practice (1965), and Max Thurian's The Eucharist Memorial (2 volumes), of 1960 and 1961.

Two Methodists of our day have made remarkable liturgical studies. The most renowned is, of course, Geoffrey Wainwright, who has lived and taught in three Continents, Europe, Africa and now in North America. His The Eucharist and Eschatology (1971) a historical and contemporary ecumenical study showed how important the vision we get of the future Kingdom of God is in worship for this is what directs the steps of the Church. But he has surpassed himself in the epoch-making Doxology. The Praise of God in Doctrine, Worship and Life. A Systematic Theology. (1980). It showed that an excellent systematic theology can be grounded on worship alone which fulfills all the basic needs of individuals in community. Here at least liturgiology has come of age. The other Methodist who has placed us all in his debt is the American James F. White by the range and relevance of his writings on worship, and, indeed, the same could be said of another Methodist, William H. Willimon. It would be inappropriate to provide a fuller bibliography of liturgiology here, but I maintain that I have cited enough authors and major works to show that our discipline need not be ashamed of itself, nor of its profound relevance for theological training and renewal through the maturity of the works which have been referred to. Liturgiology has fully come of age and is in its maturity.

III

My third major contention is that it is in Christian Worship that normally Christians capture the vision of the Christian faith. Geoffrey Wainwright makes the claim in his Doxology in the statement, "It is in and through the worshipping community that most believers catch the Christian vision."³ Now, if we accept the postulate that worship affords the primary experience of corporate Christianity -- of what it means to be part of the communion that proudly calls itself the Body of Christ -- then

we must recognize that there are some important corollaries of this perception and acknowledgement. The first is that this experience more than the brain, the top of the mind, is involved. Indeed, it can be argued, as Thomas Torrance has in fact done, that worship actually stretches the mind itself to the utmost. "Worship," he has written, "is the exercise of the mind and in the contemplation of God in which wonder and awe play an important part in stretching and enlarging our vision, or in opening up our conceptual forms to take in that which by its nature far outshines them."⁴ But worship involves far more than the top of the mind. It involves the adoring heart as well. It even opens up all the senses, those aesthetic port-holes for color, sound, touch, taste and scent. Let me insist that "vision" is a very appropriate term for the enlargement of cognition and feeling that worship involves, for it is at once an awareness of God, ourselves, the world, and our neighbors in a remarkable and unifying way that affects us totally: mind, heart, will, conscience all at once.

The point may be made more clearly by quoting Archbishop William Temple's definition of worship, even though this is incomplete:

What worship means is the submission of the whole being to the Object of worship. It is the opening of the heart to receive the love of God; it is the subjection of conscience to be directed by Him; it is the declaration of need to be filled by Him; it is the subjection of desire to be controlled by Him; and as a result of all these together, it is the surrender of the will to be used by Him.⁵

If we are right in claiming that the experience of worship properly understood uses all our faculties, then the study of worship expands to be a mighty discipline. It will demand specialists in the history of art and architecture, music, psychology; since the study of our neighbors is involved, sociology, too, in addition to theology and the history of human thought. Hence liturgiology, including all the elements of knowledge just mentioned, will require a detailed study historically, ecumenically, and contemporaneously, of all the elements of Divine worship: types of spirituality from Merton's The Seven Storey Mountain to Go, Tell It on the Mountain; the dramatic impact of the Sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion, how they have been interpreted and enacted at different times; the various attitudes of prayer and how adequately they are presented in contemporary worship - I refer to adoration and thanksgiving, confession, absolution, petition, intercession, and dedication or consecration; the Christological and sanctoral cycles in the Christian Year and how they should be incorporated in Protestant worship; the changing art, architecture and music used, disused, or abused through twenty centuries; liturgical preaching in relation to the Lectionary; and Church services as rites of passage. Can anyone reasonably argue that such correlations of Christianity, Liturgy and Culture are narrow, self-serving, anachronistic, trivial or pompous subjects for courses in theological education? I very much doubt it.

So far I have argued that there are three reasons urging the importance of liturgics in theological education: the time spent on worship in any service is three times as long as that spent on the sermon;

the profound maturity that the discipline of Liturgics has now reached as a theological discipline; and that it is in Christian worship the majority of folk learn the vision of the Christian life.

IV

The fourth consideration is an ecumenical one. It is a striking fact that since Vatican II almost all of the Churches in the world have reached an astonishing degree of unity in their understanding of worship, and even in their celebration of the sacraments, and their evaluation of preaching. There are, of course, residual differences, and there is not time to argue the details. But the evidence has been very plainly set forward in a document of the World Council of Churches which crosses denominations, ethnic groupings, and even high and low types of churchmanship. Its editors are Max Thurian and Geoffrey Wainwright and their revealing volume is titled, Baptism and Eucharist. Ecumenical Convergence in Celebration (1983).

V

A very powerful fifth argument for the importance of liturgiology is that it is essential if the Christian Church is to remain apostolically orthodox in its mission and also reformed. How otherwise can we be delivered in Protestantism from a debilitated eucharistic theology like Zwinglian Memorialism as contrasted with the real spiritual presence of Christ which Calvin taught, and which Howard Hageman has so forcefully presented in his chapter called "The Tale of Two Cities" in his admirable Pulpit and Table. To forget our history is to be haunted by heresy. It was a profound revelation to most scholars, I believe, when the Lutheran liturgiologist Brilioth showed that at different times in the history of Christianity the Eucharist had been seen from the standpoint of five different angles: Thanksgiving, Communion and Fellowship, Commemoration, Sacrifice, and Mystery. In our day we would, like the earliest Church, want to add the dimension of Eschatology stressing the joyful Banquet which points to the age to come, and which has been so excellently described in Wainwright's Eucharist and Eschatology (American edition, 1981). He has brilliantly analyzed three images: the Messianic Banquet, the Second Advent of our Lord, and the first fruits of the Kingdom of God, all experienced at the Eucharist. Perhaps the newest emphasis of all, though it was anticipated in part in the American Social Gospel and is now rehearsed in Liberation Theology, is the sense that the Eucharist is the perfect image of sharing, where rich and poor receive equal shares of the consecrated bread and wine in the brotherhood and sisterhood of Christ's Kingdom. It is therefore a proleptic vision of Christocracy as true economic as well as political democracy.

My contention is that these differing emphases have never been all incorporated in one satisfactory and unified Eucharistic Celebration, but that they should be. Without any one of them this coruscating diamond of Christ's gift will be lacking a facet of the sublime truth. And missing that facet of truth and grace, we are all deficient: our faith maimed, our vision skewed and squinty.

Finally, let me indicate that another argument for a greater recognition of the importance of Liturgics in the theological curriculum. It is the ethical consequences of Liturgy. It is, Says D. H. Tripp, at sessions of worship where Christians are expected to be most sincere, in the vows of initiation or confirmation, in marriage and ordination, and in the approach to Holy Communion. He also adds, "Worship sanctifies the Church and its members by instruction in the faith. It is committed to being orthodox both by its nature as a response to the Gospel and also by the moral need to be true to God, for the sake of honoring Him."⁶ It is supremely in worship that our pride is lowered, and we discover that humility which is the precondition to the obedience of faith. Dr. Kenneth Kirk in The Vision of God made the ethical impact of worship vividly clear in eliminating the arrogance in the service of patronage:

Yet apart from the atmosphere of worship, every act of service avails only to inflate the agent's sense of patronage. He is the doctor, humanity is his patient: he is the Samaritan, his neighbor the crippled wayfarer: he is the instructor, others are merely his pupils. Gratitude (if they show gratitude) only confirms his conviction of his own importance; resentment (if they resent his services) only ministers to the glow of self-esteem with which he comforts himself in secret.

The glory of worship, by contrast, is to elicit the grace of humility, for at its center is a Cross, the Divine token of disinterested service on the part of One who humbled himself becoming obedient to death, yes, the death of the Cross.

Every true service of worship reminds us that the essential function of the Church is to glorify God in adoration and sacrificial service. And this demands that all theological seminaries express the central importance of worship in their curricula.

FOOTNOTES

1. E. C. Ratcliff Liturgical Studies, eds. A. H. Couratin and D. H. Tripp, (London: S.P.C.K., 1976), p. 13. Burkitt citation, ibid., p. 12.
2. Adam Fox, Dean Inge, (London, 1960), p. 115, cited from his diary entry for May 28, 1911, which was Inge's first Sunday at St. Paul's.
3. p. 436.
4. God and Rationality, p. 204f.
5. The Church and Its Teaching To-day, (1936), p. 15.
6. The Study of Liturgy, eds. C. Jones, G. Wainwright, and E. Yarnold, (1978), "Worship and the Pastoral Office" by D. H. Tripp, p. 525.
7. Abridged edition, p. 184.

THE MERCERSBURG SOCIETY

As a result of several events held in recent years to commemorate the heritage of Mercersburg Theology and explore its relevance to the situation of the American Church today, the Mercersburg Society has been formed to give a more permanent form to their endeavors.

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Superior numerals in the text should indicate the placement of footnotes. The footnotes themselves should be typed separately at the end of the manuscript. Examples of style for references may be found in a past issue of The New Mercersburg Review.

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