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The Mercersburg Society has been formed to uphold the concept of the Church as the Body of Christ, Evangelical, Reformed, Catholic, Apostolic, organic, developmental and connectional. It affirms the ecumenical Creeds as witnesses to its faith and the Eucharist as the liturgical act from which all other acts of worship and service emanate.

The Society pursues contemporary theology in the Church and the world within the context of Mercersburg Theology. In effecting its purpose the Society provides opportunities for fellowship and study for persons interested in Mercersburg Theology, sponsors an annual convocation, engages in the publication of articles and books, stimulates research and correspondence among scholars on topics of theology, liturgy, the Sacraments and ecumenism.

The ***New Mercersburg Review*** is designed to publish the proceedings of the annual convocation as well as other articles on subjects pertinent to the aims and interests of the Society.

From the Editor

Let me begin with an appeal to our readers to submit papers on the general subject of Mercersburg for publication in *The New Mercersburg Review*? If you begin to see all too familiar names on the masthead, quite truthfully, it's because thoughtful writers have been shy to submit manuscripts for publication. It's rare that a quality paper isn't used, especially in the spring edition, where we are not constrained by our requirement to publish the papers from the preceding convocation. To insue the variety and quality of our journal, we need you to research the subject of Mercersburg and related topics and submit your manuscripts. Also encourage writers actively doing research in related areas, who are not members of the society, to submit papers.

The Society welcomes insights into ministry, especially provided by the renowned German theologian, Karl Barth. Joseph Tomilio, III's paper, *Called By Grace*, examines the topic of Christian vocation in Barth and so invites us into the world of the Gospel. We are reminded by Barth that leaving the secular world to enter the world of the Gospel requires sacrifice and the likelihood of hardship. So, hope becomes constituent of Christian life, and soteriology becomes the key to understanding that life as it manifests itself in Christian vocation.

Our readers will remember that last year's convocation celebrated the Heidelberg Catechism, and the published papers created enthusiastic responses. Wonderful questions were E-mailed to me, and perhaps our authors received similar inquires. In my introduction of that issue, I mentioned the storm of controversy surrounding Nevin's benign and useful resuscitation of the revered symbol. Some of you have written to me, curious of the circumstances and outcome of that controversy. Hence, I offer you the paper "First Signs of Contention: The Controversy Over Nevin's Revival of the Heidelberg Catechism in the German Reformed Church" by way explanation of what occurred. It is likely that you will not find surprising, Nevin's recognition of the hand of Melanchthon in the Catechism. Nowhere have I found a more thorough or better description of that handiwork than in the third paper published here, by the eminent theologian Bard Thompson.

"Melanchthon and the German Reformed Church" is an outstanding example of thoughtful and meticulous research. Sorting through

hundreds of manuscripts, Thompson pieces together, as if putting together a jigsaw puzzle, the fabric (influences) of the Heidelberg Catechism. And when I say meticulous, please note that there are 159 footnotes! It's exciting reading, especially for those you in the United Church of Christ, interested in your denominational lineage.

Finally, long-time society and board member, Joseph Bassett, provides our second segue for this issue from the previous one. Dr. Griffin's autumn 2003 review of Theodore Trost's new book (2002) illuminated the contributions of Douglas Horton to the UCC. Bassett fans the flames of passionate ecumenical research, bringing to our attention the volume by Elsabeth Slaughter Hilke, mentioning Horton and nestling him among noted ecumenical leaders. Once again, this is a *must read* for history buffs interested in the roots of the UCC!

CALLED BY GRACE: ELUCIDATING AND APPROPRIATING THE DOCTRINE OF VOCATION IN KARL BARTH'S *CHURCH DOGMATICS*

John Tamilio, III

Introduction

To speak about ministry in the theology of Karl Barth—be it lay or ordained, Barth does not distinguish—is to speak about soteriology. Traditional doctrines of salvation are often constructed on two pillars: justification and sanctification. In the first volume of *The Christian Story: A Narrative Interpretation of Christian Doctrine,* renowned United Church of Christ theologian Gabriel Fackre unpacks both terms. In sum, Fackre subscribes to the Pauline understanding of justification: "by grace you have been saved, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God."[1] Through grace, we enter a new, salvific relationship with God. As Fackre writes,

> Another way of speaking about this new relationship to God is *justification.* To be justified is to receive the pardon offered by God on Golgotha. The declaration of pardon to humanity now becomes the declaration of pardon to this believer, justification by grace through faith.[2]

Sanctification, our second pillar, is a lifelong process of being made holy—a process, like justification, intimately related to grace. "Grace is *sanctification* as well as *justification,* the making of persons whole (holy) as well as declaring them forgiven."[3] There is, however, a third pillar on which soteriology rests, a pillar also related to grace: vocation.

In *Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology,* Presbyterian theologian Daniel L. Migliore illustrates how soteriology

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[1] Ephesians 2:8.
[2] Gabriel Fackre, *The Christian Story: A Narrative Interpretation of Basic Christian Doctrine,* Volume 1, Third Edition (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996), 191.
[3] Ibid., 194.

extends from the receipt of grace to ecclesial praxis. "God," Migliore contends, "freely elects creatures to be partners in the mending of creation. Election is a call not to privilege but to service."[4] For Migliore, salvation is communal, current, and connected to the call to serve God in the service of others by being God's partner in Christ's ministry of reconciliation. Migliore, as even he would claim, has not uncovered something new. The roots of this doctrine are found toward the end of Karl Barth's immense fourteen volume systematic theology: *Church Dogmatics*.

In volume IV.3.2 of the *Dogmatics* (entitled "The Doctrine of Reconciliation"), Barth devotes an entire section—two hundred substantive pages—to his definition of vocation. Vocation is often viewed as a human endeavor: work we do, be it altruistic or not. Barth, however, challenges us not only to see vocation as the third pillar of salvation, but, along with justification and sanctification, as an act of grace. This runs counter to much contemporary theology, not to mention many misreadings of Barth. In the pages that follow, I will not only explicate Barth's understanding of vocation as an act of grace, but will also illustrate how a reappropriation of it can only serve to bolster a fresh understanding of ecclesiology and soteriology.

Barth's Theology of Vocation

Barth divides paragraph seventy-one ("The Vocation of Man") in volume IV.3.2 into six sub-sections:

1. Man in the Light of Life
2. The Event of Vocation
3. The Goal of Vocation
4. The Christian as Witness
5. The Christian in Affliction
6. The Liberation of the Christian

[4] Daniel L. Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), 183.

For the sake of time, I will focus on sub-sections four, five, and six. Furthermore, one can argue, as I do, that the latter three sub-sections contain the crux of Barth's understanding of vocation.

In §71.4 "The Christian as Witness," Barth begins by defining the Christian—a definition that is fundamental to our understanding of the argument that ensues.

> In all circumstances we understand by the Christian a man whom Jesus Christ has called to attachment to Himself, to His discipleship and to living fellowship with Himself, and whom, as we finally say, He has bound and indeed conjoined with Himself. In the power of the Holy Spirit it takes place and is the case that he is in Christ and Christ in him.[5]

The Christian is one called *by* Christ to be in relationship *with* Him. It is not an endeavor on which one embarks by his/her own design. Hence, from the outset of this segment of his discourse on vocation, Barth makes it clear that the Christian's call comes from God.

After defining the Christian, Barth logically moves to a summation of vocation. He maintains that

> the call of Jesus Christ is decisively an invitation and demand that the men to whom it comes should adopt a particular inward and outward line of action and conduct of which we have the basic form in the twofold command to love God and our neighbours . . . And the Christian is the man who gladly accepts this invitation and demands as a binding Word of the Lord, and stirs himself to obey and to do justice to it. He is essentially a doer of the Word of Jesus Christ which calls him to a new order and orientation of his life.[6]

This move is logical, because in Barth's system the call to serve is closely connected with Christian identity. The individual is rooted in Christ, joined with the Divine in a life of reciprocal love, and charged to share that love with others. The great commandment, which Barth cites above, is for us to love God wholeheartedly and our neighbor as ourselves. Barth reflects this in his claim that the call from Christ not

[5] Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. IV.3.2: "The Doctrine of Reconciliation" (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1962), 555.
[6] Ibid., 558-559.

only unites the Christian with Jesus, but "demands," to use Barth's word, that he/she enter a life of service. Here we have the marriage of reception and action—both acts emanating from the Divine life.

Let us not forget the title of this subsection: "The Christian as Witness." To accept the call to serve God in the service of others *is* an act of Christian witness. Barth explicates this by examining scriptural call narratives and by claiming that within these stories, as well as our own stories, is the charge to evangelize. Barth asserts that salvation is universal—the Pandora's box he opens without ever fully elucidating its contents, as many critics claim—but this is not to excuse the Christian from the task of spreading the Good News.

This, is many respects, leads us to the next sub-section: "The Christian in Affliction." Barth argues that to be a Christian is to be afflicted by three forces. The first is *the world.* Being counter-cultural, the Gospel often comes into conflict with the secular agenda. This inevitably makes the Christian's task arduous. This is compounded by the fact that the Christian brings affliction on himself/herself by his/her own witness: the second force. The Christian cannot escape God's call to serve, for "this would be a denial or renunciation of his vocation and would ineluctably carry with it the forfeiture of the personal knowledge, experience and assurance of salvation which distinguishes him from other men."[7] Hence, as argued from the outset of this article, ministry and soteriology are mutually inclusive. The third force that afflicts the Christian, ironically enough, is his/her very relationship with Christ! This point is far more difficult to explicate than the previous two. The Gospel message is scandalous. It is the unprecedented story of the one who was oppressed by both God and the world. He is the one who was crucified, rose from the dead, and lives as God's Word. The proclamation of this message, though inescapable, is the pivotal source of affliction for those called into fellowship with him.

Barth, however, does not leave us despondent. He concludes §71.5 with six further considerations. They are (with related page citations):

1. To be a Christian in affliction in the world is better than being in the world not as a Christian. In other words, it is better to be a sheep sent out among the wolves than it is to be one of the wolves (641).
2. Christ brings the Christian into affliction, but it is purposeful: it is for the sake of Christ and His name (641).
3. The Christian in affliction moves toward a goal: the fulfilled covenant of grace (642).
4. The eschatological end, however, is present with the Christian in affliction; it is not just something that is to come (643).
5. The goal of the Christian in affliction is secured by the resurrected Christ (644-645).
6. The being of the Christian in this sovereignty imparted to him by the crucified and resurrected Christ is demonstrated in his exercise of it (646).

And there is still more hope yet to break forth. The climax of paragraph seventy-one is entitled "The Liberation of the Christian." Here, Barth has brought us from an understanding of who we are and the inevitable sufferings that our calling affords us to a freedom found only in grace. After some introductory remarks, Barth offers us three *further* subsections. (Barth scholars George Hunsinger and Horace Allen teach us that in reading Barth one encounters all the twists, turns, and returns of a Mozart symphony!)

The first subsection of §71.6 explores three characteristics that are indispensable for liberation. The first is that the revelation of God in Jesus Christ is by no means illusory; it is a tangible revelation that must be applied to every person's life. The second is that the witness must point everyone to the inescapable and impending judgment of God in Christ. Lastly, the Christian must ultimately witness to God's "yes" to all creation, which frees the world from the sin in which it ensnares itself. Fackre, in the aforementioned text, illustrates sin as humanity saying "no" to God's "yes": as humanity shaking its fist at the God who seeks to live in covenant with us. From Barth's perspective, liberation begins by humanity embracing God's desire to overcome sin with grace.

[7] Ibid., 626.

The next unit is more pragmatic. Here, Barth asks *how does the liberation of the Christian actually take place?* In his inevitable numerological style, Barth offers seven answers to this question:

1. The Christian is liberated "as he is drawn out of solitariness into fellowship" (664).
2. The Christian is liberated as he is delivered "from the ocean of apparently unlimited possibilities by transference to the rock of the one necessity which as such is his only possibility" (665).
3. The Christian is liberated in "his transition from the forcible dominion of things to the free territory of man and the human" (666).
4. The Christian is liberated due to "the fact that he no longer has to desire and demand, but he now may receive" the gifts of Christ (667).
5. The Christian is liberated as "he is delivered from indecision and set in action" (669).
6. The Christian is liberated as "he no longer has to exist in a dialectic of the moral and the immoral, but may now exist in a state of forgiveness and gratitude." In other words, he no longer lives under the Law but under the Gospel (670).
7. And, lastly, the Christian's liberation is a move "from anxiety into prayer" (671).

It is here that we move into the third sub-section of §71.6 in which Barth offers his readers four final points of consideration. A street corner preacher once asked H. Richard Niebuhr if he was saved, to which he said, "'I *was* saved by what Christ did; I *am being* saved right now; I *shall be* saved when the Kingdom comes."[8] Niebuhr's response beautifully illustrates that salvation is a continuum. It is not just a prize awaiting the faithful at some ethereal finish line. It is a past, present, and future event. Salvation is *now* as well as *then*. This is Barth's argument. He claims that the liberation of the Christian, which *is* synonymous with salvation, is "an event which is commencing and not in any sense complete."[9] Barth's second point is that salvation is communal; it is not just an individual experience or goal. Furthermore (point three), salvation is an indispensable part of one's vocation as a witness for Christ. Lastly—and here Barth's fourth point seems to be somewhat trivial—the liberation of the Christian is "undoubtedly a theme which is particularly interesting and stimulating for Christians, or for those who take it seriously."[10]

In any event, the liberation of the Christian is the hope that awaits those who live as witnesses for Christ and his Gospel, for those who live lives of sacred toil. The three questions to which we must now turn, however, are: 1. How is Barth's understanding of vocation both a necessary complement to the traditional understanding of soteriology, 2. How, along with justification and sanctification, is vocation related to grace, and 3. How can vocation be appropriated into a fresh understanding of ministry?

Conclusion

In some respects, these questions have already been answered. "*We are saved by grace through faith,* as the Apostle claims. All three manifestations of soteriology—justification, sanctification, and vocation—are received by grace. Through Christ, God invites us into a new, covenantal relationship. A fundamental part of this relationship is the individual's identification and employment of his/her gifts for ministry. Paul illustrates this with his biological metaphor in 1 Corinthians 12.

In this lengthy pericope, Paul explains that all the members of Christ's Church are like the diverse parts of the human body. Each member serves a unique purpose and *all* the members are needed—no one being dispensable or more important than another—in order for the body to function as a healthy organism. And so it is with Christ. Everyone called into the body of Christ is endowed with specific gifts. Each individual has the responsibility of fostering his/her gift(s), once discerned, for the upbuilding of the Christian community and for the sake of the Gospel. Although the discernment and employment *may* be a human endeavor, the gift is given by the grace of God. Our vocation is, from a Barthian perspective, preordained.

[8] Fackre 189.

[9] Barth 673.
[10] Ibid. 677.

And so we are to respond. We are called to be sheep among the wolves—as wise as serpents and as innocent as doves—in order to bring the light of Christ's message of radical, inclusive, liberating love to those who live in darkness. It is inevitable that we will face affliction. This affliction, however, is but a segue to our liberation. None of this, however, is our own doing. It is the work of the One who calls us from ourselves into a relationship with his living Word. *This is salvation:* to be rescued from the world's agenda into the world of the Gospel, into the world of vocation. This may be Barth's message, but it is God's doing—and it is marvelous to our eyes!

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As the reader can probably surmise, a comprehensive bibliography of Karl Barth scholarship would be difficult to assemble. What I offer here are two things. First, a list of works that I cited in the preceding article and, second, a survey of some of the more prominent works written on Barth over the past fifteen years.

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FIRST SIGNS OF CONTENTION: THE CONTROVERSY OVER NEVIN'S REVIVAL OF THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM IN THE GERMAN REFORMED CHURCH

Linden DeBie

I want to begin by taking back ever so slightly, a hint of implication in my title. Contention over the Heidelberg Catechism was not Mercersburg's first controversy. Much earlier Frederick Rauch had riled feathers with his all German program at Mercersburg Seminary, offending his colleague, Lewis Mayer. And Rauch embroiled himself in another minor controversy well before Nevin's arrival at the seminary. Rauch wrote in 1835-1838, exposing what he believed were a few of the Catechism's divisive elements, one being the doctrine of predestination, and the other being the way in which Christ was present in the Eucharistic elements.[1] He received a surprise response from the editor of the *Lutheran Observer* who vehemently argued against him that American Lutherans rejected any hint of "superstition" in the Eucharist, and uniformly subscribed to a Zwinglian view on the doctrine of the Lord's Supper.[2] The article caught Rauch off guard, but warned the future leaders of the seminary that many American evangelicals had embraced Zwingli's theology, without being conscious of their departure from their own established and binding confessions.

Likewise, Nevin, well before his arrival at Mercersburg, was embroiled in controversy (over abolition) at Pittsburg Seminary. Still, as

[1] Frederick Rauch, "German Characteristics," *WeeklyMessenger of the German Reformed Church*, 1 (New Series), Nos. 19, 23, 27, 30, 35 & 39 (1935-38). Rauch's position, along with many aspects of the Catechism controversy are covered in my "German Idealism in Protestant Orthodoxy, " Diss. McGill University 1987.

[2] This was patently wrong of the *Observer's* editor. He called Rauch to task for his mishandling the difference between trans and con-substantiation. That was fair enough. But his real agenda was to refute the traditional Lutheran doctrine that Christ was truly present in the Eucharist. He insisted that American Lutherans had long since conformed to a memorialist position on the Eucharist.

Mercersburg was a movement rife with controversy, the debate over the Heidelberg Catechism was an inaugural event.

Having settled the matter of when controversy first arrived at Mercersburg, it remains the case that Nevin began his combative career in the German Reformed Church pretty much over the issue of the Catechism. Still, he did it without the intent of angering anybody. Indeed, the reasons that led to Nevin's publishing material on the Heidelberg Catechism were perfectly reasonable. First of all, he was the new leader of the German Reformed seminary (with Rauch becoming sick and dying only a year after Nevin's first article on the Catechism appeared—December 9, 1840), and Nevin felt the need to immerse himself in his new denomination's central confession. We can surmise from the novel direction of so much of Nevin's theology that the Catechism reshaped his thinking in fundamental ways. In the Catechism he discovered a symbol of historic interest, yet of current value and applicability. He was also aware of its potential therapeutic value, addressing what some had described as the spiritual "malaise" that had come upon the denomination.

Evidence of that malaise and certain leaders' conviction that the solution might be found in the Catechism, appeared long before even Rauch. Emanuel Gerhart's historical article on the German Reformed Church points to a deterioration within the denomination, which he later believed was due to rationalism. In his historic research he noted, again, even before the appearance of Rauch at Mercersburg, that the Maryland Classis knew of this deterioration and believed the Catechism might be an antidote. They petitioned the Synod to investigate whether the Heidelberg Catechism should be "the only book used in the instruction of youth and in the catechetical class . . . ."[3]

Further evidence is found in the *Messenger* (February 4, 1843), where it was reported that the denomination had recently experienced "growth, zeal and revival" by means of the recovery of the Catechism. Also in Gerhart's, "Hold Fast the Form of Sound Words,"[4] which was his inaugural address before Heidelberg Theological Seminary (1851), Gerhart praised the efforts of the Mercersburg theology in aiding the

[3] Emanuel V. Gerhart, "The German Reformed Church," *Mercersburg Review*, 14 (1867), pp. 206, 268, 274-5.

[4] Gerhart, "Hold Fast the Form of Sound Words," in *Addresses and Essays of Schaff, Nevin, and etc.* (Mercersburg, Nov. 1853).

denomination in its renewed interest in the Catechism and the benefits that followed from that interest.

Finally, while many other church leaders had turned to revivalism to resuscitate their churches, Nevin believed the Catechism was the healthier choice. Along with that came a practical concern. Nevin was obligated to raise money in support of the seminary. It would appear that he tied his fund-raising efforts to the recovery of the old faith and its institutions, and that faith was the faith of the Heidelberg Catechism.

Nevin titled his series "Essays On the Heidelberg Catechism." Initially the articles were met with great appreciation. Following a brief interruption, he returned to the essays in 1842, this time treating the topic of the Eucharist, specifically John Calvin's doctrine of the Holy Communion. Unsuspectingly, he was putting in place ideas that would lead to deep divisions both inside and outside the denomination!

Nevin was convinced and only slightly adjusted his conclusions later,[5] that the teaching of the Lord's Supper in the Catechism was essentially Calvin's. He used the term "mystery" in speaking of the Holy Supper, along with the phrase "real presence" of Christ. He pointed out that although Zwingli's view of the Eucharist had become popular among some in the German Reformed Church in America, Zwingli's view was essentially "rationalistic and superficial," and was never accepted by the Reformed churches in Europe. Furthermore, he argued that the Catechism taught that the believer was united with the life of "the Savior's glorified body." This union, said Nevin, allowed for the believer's full participation in the "whole nature" of Christ, even as much as sinful beings share in the nature and life of Adam through natural birth.[6]

Nevin believed he was providing a corrective to the Zwinglian view that was gaining popularity, not just among the German Reformed Church, but among other Protestant denominations, as well. He added that the traditional view he articulated was as much Luther's as Calvin's,

[5] There clearly was some evolution in Nevin's thinking and he revised his positions later. Perhaps most notably for this paper, originally Nevin believed the denunciation of the Roman Mass was original to the text. Nevin retracted that position later on. Still, his earlier view was used against him by his detractors. No doubt he was edified in this matter by Ursinus' commentary).

[6] Nevin, *Messenger*, "Essays," p. 1373.

although the later held it in "a more ethereal form."[7] But, warned Nevin, we should not split hairs: both embraced real presence, and this and no other was the teaching of the sixteenth-century Reformers.

Thus, the teaching that would foment controversy over the Heidelberg Catechism appeared in 1842 with Nevin's exposé of the Catechism's view of the Lord's Supper. The first objection we hear of was a minor complaint. Nevin's colleague at the seminary, Professor Reid, beseeched the church not to judge Zwingli too harshly. Reid granted to Nevin all that he said in theory, taking issue only over a single point: that Nevin cast Zwingli too strongly in the rationalistic camp.[8]

However, this small gale only hinted at the storm ahead.[9] The gale grew into a maelstrom in 1847 with a series of publications including: Nevin's tract, *History and Genius of the Heidelberg Catechism*, followed shortly thereafter with his introduction to G.W. Williard's translation of the German *Commentary of Dr. Zacharias Ursinus on the Heidelberg Catechism* (1852), Nevin's article "Zacharias Ursinus," also in 1852, and finally his 1852 defense of his positions in "The Heidelberg Catechism" (*Mercersburg Review*, No. 4). In these articles we encounter Nevin in full debate with his critics, led by the Dutch Reformed theologian, John W. Proudfit.

Nevin's tract, *History and Genius of the Heidelberg Catechism*, was essentially a summary and reiteration of his previous views, probably meant to be a handy compilation of the essay material for his readers. But with growing concern over the teachings of Mercersburg among some American evangelicals, a defense of Nevin's position was required. That reply came on the heels of his article on Zacharias Ursinus. Here Nevin makes it clear that the Catechism is in full sympathy with catholic tradition, arguing that it supports "positive" religion.[10] Nevin concludes,

[7] Calvinists know it as the believer's assent to Christ.

[8] S. Reid, "Luther and Zwingli: Zwingli's Doctrine," *Weekly Messenger of the German Reformed Church*, 7 (New Series), No. 43 (1842), p. 1418.

[9] It is prudent to keep apart the debates over the Heidelberg Catechism and the Reformed view of the Lord's Supper as they are distinct issues and events. Still, one can see how they intersect.

[10] That branch of theology that treats the historic record and customs of religion. This was especially important to the idealist theologians, including Schleiermacher and the philosopher, Hegel. It contrasts with Natural Theology,

unlike so many theological diatribes, the Catechism is not enmeshed and hence lost, in the "subtleties of Calvinism." Rather it is broader and more open to the message of Christian religion in general.

Still, he regrets the problem created by Ursinus when he followed Calvin on the matter of Christ's descent into hell, along with the uncharitable denunciation of the Roman Mass. Beyond these few infractions, said Nevin, the Catechism was an excellent example of catholic thinking, a generally irenic and edifying document, and certainly infused with the wisdom and faith of the gentle Melancthon.[11]

Proudfit's critical response came in the form of a review of Williard's translation. Proudfit represented a movement among the faculty of the seminary of the Dutch Reformed Church (The Reformed Church in America) in New Brunswick, New Jersey, who were intent on resisting the teachings of Mercersburg. The same year in which Proudfit's review appeared, the faculty was joined by a former leader in the German Reformed Church, Dr. Joseph Berg. Berg was an outspoken critic of the Mercersburg theology. As a new member of the faculty, Berg continued his efforts to criticize the teachings of Mercersburg. 1952 was also the year that the Synod of the Reformed Church in America suspended all correspondence between the two churches because of the Mercersburg theology as "being essential departures from the faith . . . ."[12]

Proudfit's review was really nothing other than an attack on Nevin, especially Nevin's sympathetic position in regard to the Roman Catholic Church. Secondly, Proudfit rejected Nevin's conclusion that the Catechism was not concerned with the "thorny dialectic subtleties of Calvinism."[13] Said Proudfit, the Catechism was thoroughly Calvinistic. Thirdly, Proudfit insisted that the so-called "mystical element" reported by Nevin neither existed in the writers of the Catechism nor in Calvin. And finally, Proudfit argued that what Nevin was really up to with his

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but more it concerns itself with way in which religion benefits and endears itself to the culture.

[11] Nevin, "Ursinus," pp. 501-3.

[12] E.T. Corwin, *Digest of Constitutional and Synodical Legislation of the Reformed Church in America* (New York:1906), p. 586.

[13] John W. Proudfit, "The Heidelberg Catechism and Dr. Nevin," rev. of the *Commentary of Dr. Zacharias Ursinus on the Heidelberg Catechism*, *Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review*, 24 (1852), pp. 108-119.

talk of "mystery," was to foist the superstitions of Rome upon the denomination and other Protestants.[14]

Proudfit then turned to the sacramental issue which he believed was at the crux of the matter. In doing so, he took aim at Nevin's conclusion that the general irenic tone of the Catechism was damaged by the denunciation of the Roman Mass (Question 80). In spite of Nevin's reminder that Question 80 was not included in the first and second editions of the Catechism, Proudfit argued that it was an integral part of the Catechism.[15] Ironically, Proudfit cites the earlier position of Nevin to support his view.[16]

Nevin responded in an unusually conciliatory manner. Rather than attack and condemn the theological views of Proudfit and his supporters, he merely sought to explain Mercersburg's position and show how it was consistent with the history and tradition of the German Reformed Church (as if to say, "We are not the RCA! Historically we have our differences. Will you dispute our heritage?") In this, we see Nevin presenting what he believed were essential differences between the denominations.

Although extremely controversial, Nevin wasn't shy about starting with Question 80. From the very beginning he revealed a prime objective, which was to soften Protestant hatred of Rome. Here, again, Nevin is aggressive in holding a position sure to infuriate his critics. Thus, he contended that Proudfit's real problem with his position was that Nevin believed that the Catechism contained the "*mystical* element" of catholic tradition, which led to Proudfit's objection of his view that the Catechism was in full "sympathy with the old *catholic* life of the church."[17]

Nevin then set out to describe in which way the historic Reformed confession was is in closer harmony to the ancient catholic tradition than to what Nevin called the "Puritan" theology now being embraced by Proudfit and others who had confused this approach with the older, Reformed view. Furthermore, Nevin wanted to distinguish between the Reformed confession in its broadest sense and the Heidelberg Catechism,

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[14] Ibid.

[15] Nevin reports that it was inserted by Frederick later.

[16] Nevin, *History and Genius of the Heidelberg Catechism.*

[17] John W. Nevin, "The Heidelberg Catechism," *Mercersburg Review*, 4 (1852) pp. 163-165.

and then separate the German Reformed and Dutch Reformed churches' confessions surrounding these issues.

As to the matter of Proudfit's "Puritan" inclinations, Nevin said the Reformed confession had little in common with the more modern Puritan position, which he believed proceeded from the

> extreme left of this prismatic spectrum, the greatest possible refraction, where the light of Christianity shades off finally, through the faint violet of Baptistic Independency, into clear Unitarian negation.[18]

Nevin argued that this being the case, the Heidelberg Catechism had no affinity with the Puritan system. Rather, the Catechism was kin to the original Lutheran Confession, both of which were "in felt organic connection with the past life of the church in its universal character."[19]

Nevin concluded that if a spectrum were drawn from left to right, the extreme right of ancient Catholicism would be in conflict with the extreme left, which would be modern Unitarianism. Said Nevin, and he is very harsh here and we know now, wrong, Unitarianism is by definition, liberal and indifferent to doctrine. Fundamentally, said Nevin, Unitarianism is rationalistic. It has no positive content for faith and doctrine. In contrast, catholicity establishes faith and life through concrete dogma given in the form of historical religion which, in the form of absolute truth, is meant for universal application.

Nevin placed the Dutch Reformed Church in the center of the spectrum. Nevin contented that, originally, it tended more toward the right, but frequently demonstrated a tendency toward rationalism. Furthermore, the current actions of the seminary professors from New Brunswick supported that tendency.

Historically, Nevin argued, until the time of Dort, the Dutch Reformed were in full agreement with the Eucharistic doctrines of the Helvetic and French churches, all subscribed to by the Palatinate. Nor did they, prior to Dort, require submission by their churches to the Geneva doctrine of double predestination.[20] This is all demonstrative of a clear historic difference between the two denominations.

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[18] Nevin, "Heidelberg," p. 165.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Ibid, pp. 169-174.

Nevin insisted that the Heidelberg Catechism remain a core historic Reformed symbol true to its original context, and not forced into a Procrustean scheme which would skew it towards rationalism and more recently toward a "Puritan" position, which preferred a non-confessional, independent Christianity. Wrote Nevin, the Heidelberg Catechism

> is primarily the leading standard symbol of the German Reformed Church. It is Calvinistic; but the force of this distinction lies mainly in its doctrine of the sacraments; while of the subject of the divine decrees, it falls in rather, as far as it goes, with the Melancthonian view, avoiding however the more knotty points of the matter altogether.[21]

Nevin therefore concluded that the Catechism is in sync with the very spirit of the German Reformed Church, which has always avoided the "higher" doctrines of Calvinism, and also those of the Belgic Confession and of Dort. Nevin wrote,

> There is a difference here between the Dutch and German churches, with all their close historical relationship, which it is very important always to bear in mind; a difference that grows mainly out of another relationship on the German side; that, namely, which this bears at the same time to confessional Lutheranism.[22]

In spite of Nevin's attempts to salvage at least the cordiality between the Dutch and German denominations, while acknowledging their distinctiveness, the New Brunswick professors would have none of it. Of course, this came as no surprise, since Joseph Berg had already rejected Nevin's historical research. This is especially curious (no doubt it must have pained Nevin to no end), since his research had been duplicated and thus effectively vindicated by 1948 by the German historian and theologian J. H. A. Ebrard's *Das Dogma vom Heiligen Abendmahl und seine Gerschichte*, Vol. 2. Still, it would appear that the historic truth behind the similar but distinct, confessions was far less important to the Dutch Reformed Church professors than was the perceived danger of the Mercersburg theology. Although they perceived more than one danger, one danger overarched them all: the hatred of Roman Catholic religion and Mercersburg's softness on that score.

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[21] Ibid, pp. 176.
[22] Ibid, p. 182.

A second attempt at reconciliation and revival of the central place of the Catechism was behind Henry Harbaugh's 1857 idea of a Tercentenary Celebration, which would include the Dutch Church (the Reformed Church in America). Harbaugh's proposal was endorsed and formalized by the Classis of Mercersburg in 1859, and a date was set to mark the three-hundredth anniversary since the elector Frederick put the Catechism into circulation (1563).

Decades later, Bard Thompson reviewed the controversy and studied in depth the sources of the Heidelberg Catechism. In 1953 he read a paper (later published in the Evangelical and Reformed Church's bulletin and now, again, in this issue of *The New Mercersburg Review*) that summarized the meticulous research that went into his doctoral dissertation. Ten years later he published specifically on the Catechism and the Mercersburg theology ("The Catechism and the Mercersburg Theology").[23] Thompson found that no individual theologian or single theological position was represented in the Catechism. He painstakingly reviewed the mountain of Palatinate texts to come to his conclusion. He discovered that not only Calvin and Melancthon, but John Laski, as well as others, made significant contributions to the Heidelberg Catechism.

Four years later, in 1967, a valuable paper on the subject was published by Brian Gerrish called "The Lord's Supper in the Reformed Confessions." [24] Gerrish confirmed Nevin's conclusion that the Heidelberg Catechism "is not so much anti-Calvinistic as timidly Calvinistic." Furthermore, he supported Nevin's idea that in terms of its sacramental theology, it steered well away from Zwingli toward the more mystical dimensions. However, against Nevin, Gerrish believed that Zwingli's view (along with Bullinger) holds sway when it comes to the issue of the sacramental means.[25]

Still, it is remarkable how advanced Nevin's research was on the topic of the Heidelberg Catechism. He believed that if he was able to show the true historic character of the Catechism, and demonstrate that his fellow members of the German Reformed Church were obligated to orient their faith according to the Catechism, that the current tendencies towards

[23] *Essays On the Heidelberg Catechism*, R.V. Moss, Jr. ed., (Philadelphia: United Church Press, 1963), pp. 53-74.
[24] *Theology Today*, 23 (1967), pp. 224-243.
[25] Ibid, p. 241.

rationalism and sectism might be reversed. However, the adamant hatred for anything Roman Catholic and the underlying fear that blind superstition was all that was behind the sacramental "mysteries," along with the obvious success of certain revival methods, hampered his efforts, almost to the point that we might conclude that Nevin backed the wrong horse. Yet, today, benefiting from hindsight, might we ask ourselves, isn't the Heidelberg Catechism still the symbol and the embodiment of the faith we cherish today? And even if we don't cherish the Catechism per se (nor use it in catechetical instruction), must not we not recognize its genius above so much of what constituted religion in Nevin's day, and still constitutes religion in our own time?

MELANCHTHON AND THE GERMAN REFORMED CHURCH

Bard Thompson

Since men sometimes need to look back in order to see ahead, history is both a directional and a devotional enterprise. And since history directs, it is never amiss to search the records once again, seeking the very Deep of our heritage. I therefore ask your consideration of these theses: [1] (a) that there was a fourth "ism" in sixteenth-century Protestantism—Melanchthonianism—having been more than a tendency but a distinct doctrinal type and a distinct party; (b) that the German Reformed Church emerged from a Melanchthonianism which was being crushed by orthodox Lutheranism; (c) that the German Reformed Church therefore does not represent a transition from Lutheranism to Calvinism, but from Melanchthonianism to something less, something other than Calvinism; (d) that we belong organically to both German and Reformed Protestantism; and (e) that, by chronology, Philip Melanchthon was our first Father.

MELANCHTHON AND LUTHER

By birth, education and loyalty, Philip Melanchthon (Schwartzerd, 1497-1560) was a son of the Palatinate.[2] As a protégé of John Reuchlin, he was elected professor at Wittenberg in his twenty-first year. Even then, he had the reputation of being "unsurpassed among the Germans" as a humanistic scholar.[3] Immediately Melanchthon fell under Luther's spell and was swept along by the enthusiasm of the Lutheran movement. He

[1] Being a summary of a doctoral dissertation, *An Historical Reconstruction of Melanchthonianism and the German Reformed Church, Based upon Confessional and Liturgical Evidence*, (Columbia University, 1953). Here reprinted from the July 28, 1953 original paper read at the Spiritual Conference, Cedar Crest College, PA., in Allentown and published in the newsletter of the Theological Seminary of the Evangelical and Reformed Church.

[2] *Melanchthon's Opera: Corpus Reformatorum*, X, 255 *ff;* XI, 1009; X, 260; 1, 652 *ff.*

[3] *Ibid, I*, 27, 34.

lectures daily to two thousand and "excelled all the doctors." [4] Luther directed students to his lectures on Matthew, explaining that "the little Greek even surpasses me in theology."[5] Melanchthon readily returned the compliments, exclaiming, "Martin is too great and wonderful for me to describe in words!"[6] He was totally lost in the busyness and enthusiasm of Wittenberg. To teach the Gospel took precedence over health and marriage.[7] Luther grew worried and finally managed to promote a marriage with Katherine Krapp, the mayor's daughter. And Melanchthon had to admit that she was a goddess.[8]

But suddenly Luther was gone! As he was returning from the Diet of Worms, the horsemen of Elector Frederick the Wise sped him away from his enemies to seclusion in the Wartburg Castle. There, on May 12, 1521, Luther dispatched a commission to a lonely and perplexed Melanchthon in Wittenberg: "Take charge . . . Be a minister of the Word . . . Defend the walls and towers of Jerusalem."[9] But, in Luther's absence Carlstadt saw an opportunity and seized it, reducing the Roman Mass and encouraging the mobs to frenzied iconoclasm.[10] At Christmastime, 1521, the Zwickau prophets arrived with their doctrine of Enthusiasm. Wittenberg was in grave disorder and in his perplexity; Melanchthon sent an urgent plea to Spalatin: "Assist me in this thing in whatever way you can."[11] Luther's return in March, 1522, put an end to the disorder. But Melanchthon could not forget the "insensitivity and bad manners" of his associates.[12] He would not be a party to such radicalism! Hence, Melanchthon began to retreat. The position he sought was on the fringe of the Church, which is not an unusual place for humanists. Being true to the humanist ideal, he would teach the classics instead of theology, especially since Carlstadt and his ilk were so plainly bad mannered and ignorant. In 1522, he wrote Spalatin his declaration of independence: "I hear that Dr. Martin wants me to turn over Greek instruction to someone else. I don't

[4] Ibid, X, 301, 302.

[5] De Wette, *Luthers Briefe, I*, 380.

[6] *Melanehthons Opera: Corpus Reformatorum, I*, 264. 7.

[7] *Ibid, X*, 193; 1, 265. 9. De Wette, *Luthers Briefe, II, 1.*

[8] Ibid, I, 478; 478.

[9] De Wette, *Lathers Briefe, II*, 1.

[10] Melanchthons Opera: Corpus Reformatorum, I, 466, 471, 491, 505. Cf., A. L. Richter, *Die evangelischen Kirchenordnungen des sechszehnten Jahrhunderts, II*, 484-485.

[11] *Melanchthons Opera: Corpus Reformatorum, I*, 514.

[12] *Ibid, I*, 613; *cf., I*, 576; *II*, 50.

want to do that. I would rather give up theology . . . I see the need for many earnest teachers of the classics."[13]

MELANCHTHONIANISM

This decisive reaction caused Melanchthon to begin thinking and acting independently of Luther by 1525; and, on that basis, he stepped back into the theological circle. His independence fast became apparent in 1524-25 when he pointedly supported Erasmus against Luther in their debate upon free will. In September, 1524, Erasmus sent his defense of free will—*De Libero Arbitrio*—with a warm letter. [14] Obviously pleased and impressed,[15] Melanchthon forwarded the book to Spalatin with this note:

> This subject, which is the most important in the Christian religion, should be carefully examined. For this reason, I am glad that Erasmus has taken sides. For a long time, I have hoped that some careful person would oppose Luther in this matter. Erasmus is the man or I am deceived.[16]

Indeed, Erasmus *was* the man! After 1525,[17] Melanchthon was committed to Synergism, insisting that "God does not work with man as a log, but draws him in such a way that his own will cooperates."[18] His formula was this: "Grace precedes; the will follows. God draws; but he draws [only] the man who is willing."[19] This was a sensitive point; in his last years, Melanchthon declared:

> I have during and after Luther's lifetime rejected the Stoic and Manichaean absurdity presented by Luther and others that all works, good and evil, in all men, good and evil, had to come about by necessity. It is obvious that such phrases are against the Word of God, harmful to all discipline, and blasphemous.[20]

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[13] *Ibid, I,* 575.
[14] *Ibid, I,* 673.
[15] *Ibid, I,* 675.
[16] *Ibid, I,* 637.
[17] Especially see the *Loci Communes* of 1535*: Ibid, RBI,* 271-274.
[18] Jacobs, *Book of Concord, I,* 262*:* The *Leipzig Interim* (1538).
[19] *Melanchthons Opera: Corpus Reformatorum IX,* 768*: Opinion of* 1558.
[20] *Ibid, IX,* 766*; Opinion* of 1558.

In these first, formative years of his independence,[21] Melanchthon also began to shape his own doctrine of the Lord's Supper. In 1527, he questioned Luther's doctrine of the local presence and oral manducation;[22] the following year, he abandoned the subtleties of ubiquity;[23] and in 1529, he wrote Oecolampadius his criticisms of the Swiss view, explaining that the Supper was a communion—*koinonia*—with the present Christ, not a commemoration of the absent Christ.[24] In 1530, he became convinced that the Fathers did not support Luther's doctrine[25] and, upon that discovery, Melanchthon the traditionalist had no choice except to break with Luther.[26] From the latter months of 1530 onward, he became increasingly convinced that the crux of the Supper was the communion of the person of Christ and the soul—a personal, efficacious, substantial indwelling of the God-Man in the believer. Melanchthon's doctrine reached maturity by 1534—an undeveloped version of the so-called Reformed doctrine of the Lord's Supper at least several years before Calvin's thought reached consistency.[27] But, unlike Calvin, Melanchthon saw no need to explain the mode of Christ's presence in the Supper. Hence, he did not belabor the necessity of faith or the agency of the Holy Spirit; and he taught that Christ was present *vescentibus* ("to those who eat"),[28] whereas Calvin used *credentibus* ("to those who believe"). For, Melanchthon was satisfied to proclaim the fact of Christ's presence, attributing it to His will to be with men. "Abide in me and I in you."[29] The mode, Melanchthon was glad to accept as a mystery.

This, then, is Melanchthonianism the doctrines of Synergism and the

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[21] In May, *1537,* he wrote that "neither day nor night has passed for ten years that I haven't thought about this problem." *Melanchthons Opera: Corpus Reformatorum, III, 537.*
[22] *Ibid, I,* 913*; IV,* 964. Discussion at Torgau
[23] *Ibid, I,* 948. Letter to Balthasar.
[24] Stupperich, Melanchthons Werke in Auswahl, I, 297-300.
[25] By virtue of Oecolampadius' *Dialogus* (1530).
[26] *Melanehthons Opera: Corpus Reformatorum, II,* 217 (to Luther); *II,* 824 (to John Brenz, 1535).
[27] By influencing Martin Bucer, Melanchthon may have indirectly influenced Calvin's doctrine of the Supper. Cf., Chapter 1, section C of the dissertation.
[28] *E.g.,* in Art. X of the *Augustana Variata.* Heppe, *Bekenntnischriften der altprotestantischen Kirche, p. 346.*
[29] *Melanchthons Opera: Corpus Reformatorum, IX,* 961*: Responsio* to Fred. III (1560).

Lord's Supper which Melanchthon developed, in *addition* to a sacramental cultus[30] and an ethical[31] and mystical piety which did not appreciate the craftsmanship of the dialectician but left the mysteries of Christianity to be accepted gladly by faith.

A QUESTION OF FRIENDSHIP

The logic of our discussion leads to the conclusion that Melanchthon was not a Lutheran but a Melanchthonian.[32] Hence, Luther and Melanchthon were friends not because they agreed but in spite of the fact that they disagreed. Their relationship was therefore fraught with tension. Although basically a peaceable person, Melanchthon was quite capable of speaking his mind. Bluntly, he called Luther's necessitarianism an "absurdity."[33] *Atrocissimum Lutheri scriptum* was the label he tied to one of Luther's polemics against the Swiss.[34] He kept on writing to Erasmus,[35] dedicated his books to Henry VIII[36] and Albert of Mainz[37] (whom Luther called "the naughtiest of boys")[38] and in many similar respects maintained his independence.

For his part, Luther generally managed to control his capacity for anger and, in fact, was sometimes exuberant in his praise of Melanchthon.[39] But he detected and was irritated by Melanchthon's "soft-pedaling" of the *Augsburg Confession*.[40] Nor was he unaware of the Melanchthonians but referred to them as "Erasmians."[41] By 1537, he was thoroughly disgruntled over Melanchthon's doctrine of the Supper and suggested to friends that

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[30] *Cf.*, Ch. III of the dissertation.
[31] Melanchthon professed to be greatly motivated by ethical concern. *Cf., Melanchthons Opera: Corpus Reformatorum, I,* 722*:* letter to Camer*arius,* 1/25/1525.
[32] Making F. Hildebrandt's *Melanchthon: Alien or Ally?* (Cambridge, 1946) a rather doubtful enterprise.
[33] *Melanchthons Opera: Corpus Reformatorum, IX,* 766*; VIII,* 916. 34. *Ibid, V,* 475.
[34] Ibid, V, 475.
[35] *Ibid, III,* 68.
[36] *Ibid, II,* 920.
[37] *Ibid, II,* 611.
[38] *Werke: Tischrteden* (*Weimar Ausgabe*), IV, 4699.
[39] *Ibid, V,* 5511*:* Luther's praise of the *Loci Communes.*
[40] "I cannot tread so softly." De Wette, *Luthers Briefe, IV,* 17.
[41] *Melanchthons Opera: Corpus Reformatorum, III,* 397.

Philip had gone Zwinglian.[42] At times, the friendship dissolved completely. This is an example.

In 1544, Luther received a copy of the Cologne Kirchenordnung[43] which Melanchthon and Bucer had prepared. Luther could find nothing but faults. The book did not condemn the Swiss, nor did it mention "the oral reception of the true body and blood."[44] And Bucer (of all people!) had written the article on the Lord's Supper.[45] Luther was livid. From the pulpit, he lashed out against Bucer, the "Blabbermouth" from Strasburg.[46] And at his desk, he began to prepare a polemic. In August, 1544, Melanchthon informed Bucer that

> our Pericles is about to thunder most violently on the Lord's Supper and he has written a book, not yet published, in. which you and I are beaten black and blue . . . I am calm and will not hesitate to escape this penitentiary if he should attack me.[47]

It was neither the first nor the last time that Melanchthon contemplated exile.[48] Meanwhile, as tension mounted, the anxious Elector literally ordered Luther "not to mention Philip Melanchthon by name in his book."[49] In October, 1544, there appeared *A Short Confession on the Holy Sacrament Against the Sacramentarians.* Zwingli and the Swiss were called "liars, blasphemers, owned by the devil and shot through by the devil;" but Bucer and Melanchthon escaped mention. And a month later, in a complete reversal, Luther cautioned his followers not to believe the rumor "that Philip or Luther has yielded to the crazy error of the Sacramentarians."[50] And so, the friendship was sound again. The observant person will discover that not only in this instance but generally it was Luther not Melanchthon who closed his eyes to the differences.

THE RISE AND FALL OF THE MELANCHTHONIAN PARTY

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[42] *Ibid,* III, 427: Chancellor Brück to the Elector.
[43] Richter, *Kirchenordnungen,* II, 30 *ff.*
[44] De Wette, *Luthers Briefe, V,* 708.
[45] *Ibid, V,* 670*:* Melanchthon to Luther, reporting progress in Cologne.
[46] *Melanchthon Opera: Corpus Reformatorum, V,* 478.
[47] *Ibid, V,* 474.
[48] *Ibid, VI,* 860*:* "For fifteen years I have daily expected expulsion and am still expecting it."
[49] *Ibid, V,* 746.
[50] De Wette, *Luthers Briefe, V,* 697.

Given the definition of Melanchthonianism—the doctrines of Synergism and the Lord's Supper, the sacramental cultus, and the ethical and mystical piety developed by Malanchthon and associates independently of Luther and Calvin—one can determine the extent of its currency by examining painstakingly the confessions and liturgies of sixteenth-century Germany, learning what was being taught on these critical issues. The results of such an enterprise prompt the following historical reconstruction.[51]

John Bugenhagen introduced Melanchthonianism to Pomerania in 1535, when it spread rapidly throughout northwestern Germany.[52] The following year (1536), under the leadership of John Brenz, the Swabian duchy of Württemberg became Melanchthonian.[53] Thence, it followed the Rhine northward into the Palatinate (1554-56)[54] and Zweibrücken.[55] Hesse began to yield as early as 1539;[56] from Hesse, Melanchthonianism penetrated Nassau.[57] Under Melanchthon's personal guidance, Cologne became Melanchthonian in 1543.[58] Saxony itself succumbed to the force of two explicitly Melanchthonian creeds, *Reformatio Wittenbergensis* (1545) and *Confessio Saxonica* (1551).[59] And a short lived Melanchthonianism began in Mecklenburg in 1552.[60]

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[51] Cf., Chapter II of the dissertation.
[52] Cf., the Kirchenordnung of 1535: Richer, Kirchenordnungen, I, 248-260; I, 354; II, 56; II, 229 *ff.*; II, 386 *ff.*
[53] Cf., Brenz's Catechism *of 1536;* Karl Buchrucker, *Die Normalkatechismen der christlichen Kirchen*, pp. 1-8.
[54] Cf., the *Kirchenordnungen* of 1554, 1556*:* Richter, *Kirchenordnungen, II,* 146 *f.*, 177 *f.*
[55] Cf., the *Kirchenordnung* of 1557*:* Richter, *Kirchenordnung, II,* 146.
[56] Cf., the Cassel *Kirchenordnung* of 1539: Richter, *Kirchenordnungen, I,* 301 *ff.*
[57] The *Kirchenordnung* and *Agenda* of 1576 (Richter, *Kirchenordnungen, II,* 400*)* were reproductions of the Hessian *Reformation* (1573) and *Agenda* (1574)*: Ibid, II,* 348, 393.
[58] Cf., Archbishop Hermann's Pia Deliberatio (1543): Richter, Kirchenordnungen, II, 30 ff. Cf., De Wette, Luthers Briefe, V, 670; cf., Melanchthons Opera: CR, V, 113.
[59] Richter, *Kirchenordnungen, II,* 81 *ff.* Heinrich Heppe, *Die Bekenntnisschriften der altprotestantischen Kirche Deutschlands*, pp. 403 *ff.*
[60] Cf., the *Kirchenordnung of* 1552*:* Richter, *Kirchenordnungen, II,* 115 *ff.*

Thus, from Württemberg in the south to the Dutch border in the north, the Rhine country was dotted with Melanchthonian strongholds. And every electorate bordering the Baltic Sea, from the Danish peninsula to Prussia was Melanchthonian. To this list must be added the very cradle of the Reformation-Saxony.

The Palatinate offers a good example of the impact of Melanchthonianism, which entered our spiritual fatherland from neighboring Württemberg and through the formative influence of the Württemberg reformer, John Brenz. Before 1563, congregations worshipped according to a liturgy which was a reproduction of the Württemberg rite of 1553;[61] children mastered a catechism written by Brenz in 1536;[62] preachers conformed to Melanchthon's *Examen Ordinandorum,* a doctrinal statement which the Palatinate borrowed from the Mecklenburg *Kirchenordnung* of 1554;[63] and the entire religious life of the land—in church and school—was governed by Melanchthon's revision of the *Augsburg Confession,* known as the *Variata.*[64]

The *Variata*[65] appeared in 1540—a revision of the *Augsburg Confession* boldly undertaken by Melanchthon around 1536, to bring that classic evangelical confession into conformity with Melanchthonianism, to allow both Synergism (Art. XVIII) and the Melanchthonian doctrine of the Supper (Art. X) to have confessional status.[66] Under the guise of being an improved edition of the original *Confession,* the *Variata* contributed to the vast spread of Melanchthonianism. In fact, the orthodox Lutherans were so asleep to the real significance of Melanchthon's revision that it went unchallenged until 1561. Some scholars believe that the original edition (1530) fell entirely out of print. Be that as it may, it is far less eloquent testimony to the supremacy of the *Variata* than the fact the princes (among them Palatine Elector Otto Henry) who signed the *Frankfort Recess* in 1558, believing they were "clarifying" and "reaffirming" the

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[61] Richter, *Kirchenordnungen, II,* 177.
[62] *Ibid.* Cf., Buchrucker, *Normalkatechismen*, pp. 1-8.
[63] *Melanchthon Opera:* CR, XXIII, 1-103*;* Richter, *Kirchenordnungen, II,* 116.
[64] *So* said Frederick III at Naumburg: A. Kluckhohn, *Briefe, I,* 158 *ff.*
[65] Text: Heppe, *Die Bekenntnisschriften der altprotestantischen Kirche Deutschlands*, pp. 340 *ff.*
[66] *Ibid*, p. 350*;* p. 346.

Augsburg Confession,[67] actually subscribed to a consistently Melanchthonian statement, and who, believing they were quoting the Augsburg doctrine of the Lord's Supper,[68] used phrases taken from Melanchthon's *Loci Communes* and other purely Melanchthonian statements.[69] No wonder that in 1580, the princes who met to sign the *Formula of Concord* complained: "It is no longer clear to us or to our theologians what is the Confession once offered to the Emperor at Augsburg."[70]

The Lutherans finally awoke to the fact that there were two orthodoxies in Germany—Lutheranism and Melanchthonianism. The latter obviously had to be repudiated. Hence, the rigid party of *Flacius Illyricus*[71] described themselves as Gnesio Lutherans—"genuine Lutherans"—intimating that their opponents were not genuine. Moreover, they branded the Melanchthonians Crypto Calvinists—"secret Calvinists"—doing the double disservice of making Calvinism the dirty name of sixteenth-century Germany, besides falsely impugning the authenticity of Melanchthonianism, about which there was nothing "secretly Calvinistic." And by the very nature of its cause, Gnesio Lutheranism became a rigidly orthodox movement, approaching scholasticism.

In its twenty-first year of existence, the *Variata was* finally challenged at the Colloquy of Naumburg, January-February, 1561. The meeting was prompted by rumors that the Palatinate, under Elector Frederick III, was flirting with Calvinism. Could it be, as the now embittered John Brenz put it,[72] that Calvinism was lurking in the *Variata*? Yes, so vigorously did Electors Frederick of the Palatinate and Augustus of Saxony support

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[67] *Ibid*, p. 563.
[68] *Ibid*, pp. 568-570.
[69] Specifically: the *Variata, Examen Ordinandorum, Confessio Saxonica* and the *Loci Communes* (1535).
[70] *. . . dass wir noch unsere Teologen wissen mögen, welches die rechte and einmal übergebene Augsburgische Confession sei. Die Bekenntnisschriften der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche* (*Göttingen*, 1952), p. 746.
[71] Flacias, Amsdorf, Gallus, Wigand, Timann, Westphal, Hesshus were the chief Gnesio Lutheran controversialists. Among the Melanchthonian leaders were Camerarius, Eber, Major, Pfeffinger, Peucer, Bugenhagen. Brenz became a Gnesio Lutheran in 1559.
[72] Brenz first entertained this suspicion in conversations with John Laski at Stuttgart in 1556. Cf., A. Kuyper, *a Lasco Opera, II*, 722-730.

the *Variata*[73] that on February 1, the evangelical princes[74] signed an agreement which affirmed the *Augsburg Confession* of 1530 but definitely recognized the *Variata* to be a thoroughly accurate interpretation of the original. The basic reason for this decision was (in the words of the princes) "because that clarified *Confession,* which was published in 1540 . . . is to a much greater degree in use in our churches and schools."[75] The *Naumburg Repetition* was an eloquent testimony of the wide currency of the *Variata* and, hence, Melanchthonianism. Naumburg nevertheless foreshadowed the *Formula of Concord*[76] (1580) which solved the same problem the problem of the two confessions and the two orthodoxies—in precisely the opposite way. It repudiated the *Variata* and thereby crushed Melanchthonianism. Those Melanchthonian affiliates which refused to subscribe to the *Formula* formed a new doctrinal alliance known as the German Reformed Church. Forth from dying Melanchthonianism it arose. Its piety and historical sensitivity were German. It continued to affirm the *Variata.* It did not call itself nor was it Calvinistic, for it recoiled from metaphysical conceptions of Christianity, and its doctrine did not pivot upon the *decretum Dei absolutum.* Yet, as a displaced person, it turned to the Reformed churches, seeking their comfort and assistance against Lutheran orthodoxy, and often accepting elements of their doctrine and worship. By 1614, the German Reformed Church included Hesse, Nassau, Anhalt, Bremen and Brandenburg; but it started in Heidelberg in 1563. Thus, we turn to that crisis in Heidelberg between Gnesio Lutheranism and Palatinate Melanchthonianism, which produced the first of the German Reformed churches.

THE CRISIS IN HEIDELBERG

The first consistent Protestantism in the Palatinate was Melanchthonianism of the Württemberg or Brentian type, which Otto Henry introduced to Pfalz-Neuburg in 1554[77] and then, as

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[73] Kluckhohn, *Briefe, I*, 158 *ff.*
[74] Except the Gnesio Lutheran zealot, John Frederick of Saxony, who was Fred. III's son-in-law.
[75] Heppe, *Die Bekenntnisschriften der altprotestantischen Kirche Deutschlands,* pp. 583 *ff.*
[76] Text: *Die Bekenntnisschriften der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche* (*Göttingen*, 1952), pp. 735-1135.
[77] Richter, Kirchenordnungen, II, 146 ff.

Elector, to the Electoral Palatinate in 1556. In accordance to the *Kirchenordnung of* 1556[78]—closely fashioned after the Greater Württemberg rite of 1553[79]—churches at worship used Württemberg forms; preachers consulted the *Variata* and Melanchthon's *Examen Ordinandorum;* and a new generation of Christians recited John Brenz's *Catechism* (1536):[80]

> Q. What is the Lord's Supper?
> A. It is a sacrament and divine *wahrzeichen*[81] in which Christ truly and presently distributes his body and blood and assures us thereby that we have the forgiveness of sins and eternal life.

In 1557, with Melanchthon's first-hand assistance,[82] Otto Henry reorganized the decrepit University of Heidelberg and thus, by his diversified appointments, made theological conflict inevitable. The Gnesio Lutheran zealot, Tilemann Hesshus, was appointed President of the faculty and General Superintendent in 1537,[83] Michael Diller, Otto Henry's court-preacher since 1543, upheld Melanchthonianism. And Peter Boquin, who among others was appointed in 1557, was a Calvinist. Having signed the significant and Melanchthonian *Frankfort Recess* on March 18, 1558,[84] Otto Henry returned to Heidelberg to be confronted by the first outbreak between Hesshus and the impetuous Reformed deacon, William Klebitz. As the battle was joined between Gnesio Lutheranism and Melanchthonianism, death came providentially to Otto Henry on February 12, 1559.

The reign of Frederick III began in utmost confusion. The Palatinate was filled with religious refugees, whom Otto Henry had invited—a condition which distressed Melanchthon.[85] Refugees and diversified theologians created traffic in creeds—a situation made critical when

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[78] *Ibid, II,* 177.
[79] *Ibid, II,* 131 ff.
[80] Buchrucker, *Normalkatechismen,* pp. 1-8.
[81] A term retained in several (sacramental) questions of the *Heidelberg Catechism, e.g.* #66.
[82] Melanchthons Opera: Corpus Reformatorum, IX, 341, 343. Camerarius, Vita Philippi Melanchthonis, p. 371.
[83] Struve says the appointment was made with Melanchthon's advice (?): K*irchen-Historie,* p. 54.
[84] Heppe, *Die Bekenntnisschriften der altprotestantischen Kirche Deutschlands,* p.579.
[85] *Melanchthons Opera:* CB, *IX,* 144, 146: to Brenz; to Camerarius.

Hesshus suppressed Brenz's *Catechism* in favor of Luther's. All parties twisted the *Augsburg Confession* for their purpose. According to the official doctrine of the Supper,[86] Christ was present "with the bread and wine." Hesshus insisted upon "in, with, and under" the bread. His ardent supporters added, "round and round" the bread. To that other extreme, Klebitz insisted upon the necessity of faith.[87]

While Frederick attended the Diet of Augsburg in the summer of 1559, Hesshus denounced Klebitz from the pulpit as a devil, an Arian heretic, and a *Schwärmer;* snatched the cup from Klebitz's hand during the Lord's Supper; excommunicated him on September 6 and ordered him expelled. Frederick returned to find chaos. Diller failed in a final peace effort, using the words "with the bread and wine." In exasperation, Frederick fired Hesshus and Klebitz on September 16 and sent secretary Stephan Cirler to secure Melanchthon's advice, for he was indeed the spiritual father of the Palatinate.

Melanchthon's *Responsio . . . ad questionem de controversia Heidelbergensi,*[88] dated November 1, 1559, said essentially three things: 1) put aside all controversial formulas; 2) stress the Pauline words, "The bread which we break is the communion of the body of Christ;" and 3) explain the meaning of "communion" *(koinonia)* in terms of "consociation with the body of Christ." Frederick caused Melanchthon's *Responsio* to be published, sanctioned it as normative doctrine,[89] and, on August 12, 1560, decreed that clergy must conform to it or vacate their pulpits.[90]

Meanwhile John Brenz watched his grip on Palatinate affairs slip away and became aroused by rumors of Crypto Calvinism. On December 19, 1559, at the Synod of Stuttgart, Brenz led Württemberg back to Lutheranism and issued a *Confession on the Real Presence,* which taught absolute ubiquity and oral manducation[91] The "decree of the Württemberg

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[86] From the Greater Württemberg rite: Richter, K*irchenordnungen, II,* 137; cf., Struve, K*irchen-Historie,* p. 48. Diller consistently used this formula.
[87] See Klebitz's *Theses de Eucharistia,* Apr. 4, 1559: Struve, K*irchen-Historie,* p. 78.
[88] *Melanchthons Opera:* CB, *IX,* 960 ff.
[89] By a *Kirchen-Raths Ordnung* of 1560.
[90] Struve, *Kirchen-Historie,* pp. 86-87; Alting, *Historia Ecclesiae Palatinate,* pp. 180 f.
[91] Heppe, *Die Entstehung and Fortbitdung des Lutherthums and die kirchlichen Bekenntnis-Schriften desselben vex* 1548-1576, pp. 60 *ff.*

abbots" (as Melanchthon called the *Confession)*[92] was widely discussed over the backyard fences of the empire. To rescue his father-in-law from "Calvinism," John Frederick of Saxony hurried to Heidelberg in June, 1560, with his Gnesio Lutheran experts. During the public disputation which followed (June 5-7),[93] Frederick was impressed by the way Peter Boquin defended the Calvinist doctrine of the Supper[94] and thereafter brought other Reformed spokesmen to Heidelberg. German scholarship generally attributes Frederick's "conversion to Calvinism" to this incident. If so, he was indeed a peculiar sort of Calvinist. Two months afterward, he made conformity to Melanchthon's *Responsio* binding upon all clergy; six months later, he staunchly supported the *Variata* at the Naumburg Colloquy; three years afterward (1563), he again acknowledged the *Augsburg Confession* and the *Frankfort* Recess.[95] Six years afterward (1566), he declared to the princes and Emperor at Augsburg: "What men understand by Calvinism, I don't know . . . I have never read Calvin's writings."[96] And sixteen years afterward, in his last will and testament, he confessed solely to the *Augsburg Confession.*[97] We do not dare question the veracity of this heroic man's explicit affirmations. The truth is that neither Frederick nor the Palatinate suddenly moved from this "ism" to that "ism." Rather, they were resilient to Gnesio Lutheran pressure and moved so as to preserve what they could of the Melanchthonian heritage. The *Heidelberg Catechism* itself was built upon this very resiliency.[98]

THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM

Under the torment of Gnesio Lutheranism was the *Heidelberg Catechism* conceived. Allies were few; enemies, plentiful—Brenz in Württemberg, Hesshus now in neighboring Zweibrücken, and John Frederick of Saxony. In 1562, to implement his policy of resiliency,

[92] *Melanchthons Opera:* CR, *IX,* 1036.
[93] Complete text: Struve: K*irchen-Historie*, pp. 94-98.
[94] Using Klebitz's *Theses:* Struve: *Kirchen-Historie,* p. 78; p. 98.
[95] Kluckholm, *Briefe, I,* 450.
[96] *Ibid, 1,* 661-664.
[97] Heppe, *Bekenntnisschriften der reformirten Kirchen,* pp. 1-18.
[98] It is said that Fred. became a Calvinist when he substituted the authority of the Word for the authority of Luther. But this is precisely what *Melanchthon* ecouraged in his *Responsio.* And *Melanchthon* decidedly placed Luther's doctrine under the judgment of the Word, sometimes finding it "contrary to the Word" and "blasphemous." Cf., *Opera,* IX, 766.

Frederick commissioned a new catechism. And when it had been published, he commented: "We are not conscious of the slightest defection from the previous doctrine . . ."[99]

But the problem is that (as Olevianus, informed Bullinger)[100] the *Heidelberg Catechism* consists "not of one but of many" sources; and with the exception of Brenz's *Catechism* and Melanchthon's *Examen,* these were all Reformed sources, worked together by a commission in which Reformed theologians predominated. Yet, in his "Preface" to the *Catechism,* Frederick does not let us forget that he was the ultimate overseer.[101] His criteria were two—the *Augsburg Confession* as the matrix of evangelical unity and the link with the historical church and the Bible as the core and the corrective of tradition.

The entire theological faculty and all the Superintendents and the most prominent ministers" collaborated (according to the "Preface"),[102] basing their work chiefly upon the Larger and Smaller Catechisms of Zacharius Ursinus.[103] The assumption that Ursinus was the principal link with Melanchthon is a misconception for two reasons—because Melanchthonianism embraced the land long before Ursinus came upon the scene and because Ursinus did not appear in the Palatinate as a Melanchthonian.

He was merely 27 when he arrived in 1561. As Melanchthon's pupil from 1550-57, he had indeed said, "When Philip has spoken I cannot and dare not think otherwise."[104] And in his inaugural address in Breslau (1558), he zealously recommended Melanchthon 's *Examen.*[105] But when, in 1560, the Gnesio Lutherans drove him from Breslau, Melanchthon was dead and Ursinus exclaimed, "If my teacher Melanchthon were still alive, I would go nowhere else but to him. But since he is dead, I will go to Zurich where there are pious, great, and learned men."[106] It was to Zurich, then, by default. And it was love at

[99] Kluckhohn, *Briefe,* I, 450.
[100] Sudhoff, *Olevianus and Ursinus,* p. 483. Letter of April 14, 1563.
[101] Niesel, *Bekenntnisschriften and Kirchenordnungen . . . der reformirten Kirche,* p. 139.
[102] *Ibid.*
[103] *Ibid.*
[104] Sudhoff, *Olevianus und Ursinus,* p. 487.
[105] Cf., *Corpus Doctrinae* of David Paresis, Appendix.
[106] Sudhoff, *Olevianus ud Ursinus,* p. 487.

first sight. Writing to his patron, October 6, 1560, Ursinus confessed that he had accepted the Swiss position in every particular—*de Sacramentis, de Providentia et Electione Dei, de libero arbitrio, de Traditionibus humans in Ecclesia, de disciplinae christinae severitate.*[107] Hence, the Ursinus who came to Heidelberg was a young man, unsettled in his thought, this doctrinal predilection divided between Wittenberg and Zurich. In Heidelberg, he labored upon three catechisms.[108] The Larger pivots upon Peter Martyr's doctrine of the covenant; the Smaller abandons the covenant matrix and emphasizes "comfort" in the context of election; and the Heidelberg makes "comfort" the controlling idea. In these three, one source becomes increasingly important, until, in the *Heidelberg Catechism,* it leads all other sources—the particular type of Calvinism taught by John Laski.

As Superintendent of the refugee congregations in London, that unsung but important reformer, John Laski (a Laseo),[109] published a *Kirchenordnung* in 1550—*Forma ac Ratio,*[110] of which the liturgical and catechetical portions were the determinative sources of the Palatinate Liturgy and the *Heidelberg Catechism.* The message of all Laski's catechisms[111], was "comfort."[112] He did indeed teach election, but simply as the source of assurance. Decidedly did he reject a limited atonement[113] and frankly stated that Calvin had written "too harshly" on predestination.[114] Is this not the spirit of the *Heidelberg Catechism?* But how did Laski's teachings[115] penetrate the Palatinate? Laski had been adviser to Otto

[107] Sudhoff, Olevianus *und Ursinus,* p. 9: Ursinus to Crato of Crafftheim..
[108] Cf., *Ursini Opera (ed.,* Quirinus Reuter), II.
[109] Cf., Ch. IV, section D of the dissertation. Cf., A. Kuyper, *Joannis a Lasco Opera.* 2 vols. (Amsterdam: Muller, 1866).
[110] Kuyper, *a Lasco Opera,* 11, 1-277; Richter, *Kirchenordnungen,* 11, 99 *ff.*
[111] There were three important catechisms, all of them based upon Laski's *Emden Catechism* of 1546: (1) Micronius' London abridgment, 1550 *(Opera, II,* 127 *ff* .), (2) The unabridged London edition, 1551 *(Opera,* II, 341-475). (3) Micronius' second abridgment, known as the *Emden Catechism* of 1554 (Opera, 11, 500-543).
[112] See questions 124-127 in #2 (above); questions 14, 24, 37 in #1; question 24 in #3.
[113] *Opera* 1, 503 and in many other instances, especially in the Catechisms.
[114] *Opera,* 11, 676: Laski to Bullinger, June 6, 1553.
[115] On the Lord's Supper, Laski stressed obsignation (*obsignari*)—the communion of the body and blood of Christ is "sealed." *Cf., Opera, I,* 470, 571.

Henry since 1545;[116] he visited Melanchthon in Wittenberg in 1556,[117] when Ursinus was living and studying with Melanchthon; his refugee congregation, having been driven from England during the Marian persecution, settled near Heidelberg in 1562, bringing with them the Laskian catechisms and liturgy. Both Ursinus and Olevianus communicated with these refugees.[118] Finally, the Heidelberg theologians Peter Dathenus and Immanuel Tremellius had been closely associated with Laski in London prior to their services in the Palatinate.

Of 129 questions in the *Heidelberg Catechism,* probably half were taken from existing catechetical works. Of that number, independent research[119] attributes at least 35 questions to the catechisms of John Laski; whereas not over ten can positively be attributed to Calvin.[120] In addition to mathematical superiority, the Laskian catechisms contributed the formative questions—oncomfort (1, 21, 26, 31, 53, 54), fai th (21), atonement (37), church (54), creed, commandments and Lord's Prayer. The four questions (1, 31, 53, 54) which teach election as a source of comfort were all supplied by the Laskian catechisms.

Considering all factors—on the one hand, the inward and mystical piety, the Christological principle, the Lutheran structure, the reticence toward the speculative element of reprobation and, on the other hand, the doctrine of election subservient to the controlling idea of "comfort," it is apparent that the *Heidelberg Catechism* represents a

[116] *Opera,* II, 718; Struve, *Kirchen-Historie, p. 65;* Alting, *Historia,* p. 171.
[117] *Opera, II,* 733.
[118] *Ursini Opera* (ed. Reuter), I, 8.
[119] I acknowledge but sometimes contest a Lang's Der Heidelberger Katechismus and vier verwandte Katechismen: Quellenschriften zur Geschichte des Protestantismus, 1907.
[120] Laski: 1, 21, 22, 26, 29, 31, 33, 84, 35, 37, 53, 54, 56, 66, 68, 69, 74, 81,82,92-113,101,102,104,108,119-124. Calvin *(le Catéchisme de* l'Eglise *de Genéve,* 1542): 27, 45, 46, 47, 49, 70, 109, 110. To Calvin's list, Lang adds 30, 32, 48, 88, 108. I attribute 108 to #14 of the Emden Catechism of 1554. Lang ascribes 21, 25, 27, 45, 56, 60, 86, 91, 117, 127 to Leo Juda's Smaller Catechism and 80, 90, 102 to Bullinger; 27, 104, 106, 129 to Bucer and 2, 52, 94, 120, 128 to Zell. I attribute 21 to #27 in the Emden Catechism

union of what Nevin called "the Melanchthonian cadence"[121] and Laskian Calvinism.[122]

DEFENSE OF THE TRADITION

Immediately the opponents of Frederick's *Catechism* stepped forward. Son-in-law John Frederick of Saxony turned daughter against father.[123] Emperor Maximilian, having found the *Catechism* to be Zwinglian, threatened exclusion from the *Peace of Augsburg*.[124] The princes of Württemberg, Zweibrücken, and Baden charged: "a seductive and damned error!"[125] And the "restless theologians"[126] agitated. Frederick replied calmly (September 14, 1563): "There has been no defection . . . We acknowledge and embrace the same divine Word, the [*Augsburg*] *Confession* derived from it, the *Apology*, and the *Frankfort Recess*."[127]

Like the handwriting on the wall came the announcement and agenda for the forthcoming Imperial Diet to be held in Augsburg, 1566; the second item on the agenda promised a discussion of "the destructive and corrupting sects."[128] Augsburg was to be Frederick's Worms. And his heroism before Emperor and princes would match that of Luther. He arrived in March to find that he was already being regarded as an apostate.[129] On April 17, he replied: "We still abide by the . . . *Augsburg Confession* and its *Apology* and by the *Frankfort Recess*. . . [This is the doctrine] which we still profess and command to be regularly preached and taught in our church and schools."[130] On May 14, before the

[121] Nevin, "Zacharius Ursinus," *Mercersburg Review*, III (Sept., 1851), 490 *ff.*

[122] And, of course, the Calvinist doctrine of the Supper which was relatively compatible with the Melanchthonian doctrine. Synergism was completely abandoned.

[123] Kluckhohn, *Briefe*, I, 390 f., 416, 440: Letters of Mar. 30, July 7 & 21, 1563.

[124] *Ibid, I,* 398. The *Peace of Augsburg* (1555) excluded all religions other than Catholic and Lutheran. Cf., Kidd, *Documents of the Continental Reformation,* p. 364.

[125] Referring to the sacramental doctrine of the *Catechism.* Kluckhohn, *Briefe, I,* 399.

[126] *Ibid,* I, 464 *ff.*

[127] *Ibid*, I, 449-460.

[128] *Ibid,* I, 625 *f.*

[129] He was not allowed to sign his name with the Evangelical princes.

[130] Kluckhohn, *Briefe*, I, 652 *ff.* Frederick to Augustus of Saxony.

Diet, Frederick was charged with gross innovations and ordered to recant on penalty of being deposed.

For a quarter-hour, he meditated; then returned to the Diet, followed by John Casimir who carried the Bible and the *Augsburg Confession.* Frederick spoke:

> As far as religious matters are concerned, I freely confess that . . . I acknowledge as Master only Him who is King of kings and Lord of lords . . . Therefore I cannot grant your Imperial Majesty the right to stand in place of my God and Saviour. What men understand by Calvinism, I don't know. I can say with a clean conscience that I have never read Calvin's writings: As to the agreement made at Frankfort [i.e., the *Recess]* and as to the *Augsburg Confession* that I signed at Naumberg with the other princes—the majority of whom are present today—in this faith I continue firmly . . . And I do not believe that anyone can successfully show that I have done or accepted anything that stands opposed to that Confession . . . If any person—regardless of his age, station or class, even the humblest—can teach me something better from Holy Scripture, I will thank him from the bottom of my heart; . . . and here at hand are the Scriptures . . . If, contrary to my expectations, my defense should be regarded as of no account, I shall take comfort in that which my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ has promised to me and to all who believe: that whatsoever we lose on earth for His name's sake, we shall receive a hundred fold in the life to come.[131]

The princes were moved. Said Augustus of Saxony: *Fritz, du bist frömmer denn wir alle.*[132]

Rumor had it that Bullinger had written the *Heidelberg Cate*chism. And, indeed, in 1565, Frederick had requested Bullinger to send a confession in support of his *Catechism.*[133] In reply, he received *the Second Helvetic Confession* (1562),[134] which he kept in reserve, apparently intending to

[131] *Ibid*, I, 661-664. Among the princes, only Philip of Hesse continued to support Frederick; but Philip was too old to attend the Diet.

[132] Kluckhohn, *Briefe*, I, 622. The issue, however, remained unresolved. On May 23, Frederick was warned about the Calvinism and Zwinglianism in his sacramental articles. The next day, he affirmed the *Augsburg Confession,* again disclaimed knowledge of Calvinism, again challenged his opponents to improve his doctrine by scripture. *Ibid,* I, 677-682.

[133] He was also in touch with Calvin. Cf., *Ibid,* II/2, 1037 *f.*

[134] *Ibid,* II/2, 1039-1040.

use it only if the princes were successful in expelling him from the Evangelical Estates. Writing from Amberg, November 1, 1566, Frederick spiked with enthusiasm the rumor of alliance with the Swiss "The report that I have had my *Catechism* and *Kirchenordnung* prepared in Zurich by Bullinger and his associates is an open and barefaced lie."[135] There is, in fact, very little historical basis for the assumption that the German Reformed Church had organic ties with the Swiss Reformation.

Meanwhile, in a flurry of polemical tracts, theologians busily attacked the *Catechism.*[136] Ursinus responded, sometimes appealing to the *Augsburg Confession* to justify elements of Palatinate Religion.[137] In fact, instead of suppressing the Melanchthonian heritage, the Heidelberg authorities precisely kept it in the public mind. In 1566, for instance, an important catechetical aid was published in Heidelberg—*The Teaching of the Augsburg Confession, its Apology and Repetition and the Frankfort Recess on the Sacraments.*[138]

Frederick's last will and testament—*Christliche Confession* (1577)—was published the year after his death (October *26,* 1576). In addition to the Bible, the aged Elector confessed solely to the *Augsburg Confession,* demanding only the freedom to interpret it.[139] We are obliged to accept the testimony of this heroic man—that the Palatinate Reformation of 1563 cannot be regarded as an apostasy from German Protestantism, but as an attempt to oppose the dogmatic orthodoxy of Gnesio Lutheranism in favor of the old evangelical or Melanchthonianism consciousness, with its irenic approach to the Reformed churches.

THE EMERGENCE OF THE GERMAN REFORMED CHURCH

That very concern, shared by the displaced churches which refused to sign the *Formula of Concord* (1850),[140] became the matrix for a new doctrinal

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[135] *Ibid,* I, 726.
[136] Cf., *Ibid,* I, 399.
[137] *E.g., Grundlicher Bericht vom heiligen Abendmahl . . . aus einhelliger Lehre, der alters rechtglaubigen Christlichen Kitchen and auch der Augaspurgischen Confession (1564) :* Ebrard, *Dogma von heiligen Abendmahl, II, 618-634.*
[138] Heppe, *Die confessionelle Entwicklung,* pp. 405-425 (text).
[139] Heppe, *Die Bekenntnisschriften der reformirten Kirchen,* pp. 1-18.
[140] Anhalt, Heese, Nassau, the Wetterau, Pomerania, Holstein, Strassburg, Frankfort, Worms, Nürnberg, Bremen. John Cisimir, who represented the true spirit of the Palatinate, refused to sign. Among others, Pomerania eventually subscribed.

type, known as the German Reformed Church,[141] a church committed to evangelical religion and therefore committed in friendship to all evangelical parties in or beyond Germany. Let the *Nassau Confession* (1578) describe this policy:[142]

> After the separation from the Papacy took place, two doctrines . . . appeared, namely, the Augsburg, the first and oldest confession in the German Empire . . . and then the doctrine of the other reformed churches outside Germany a few years afterward . . . Since Philip Melanchthon, as a distinguished teacher of the Augsburg doctrine, maintained a firm Christian unity and love with the teachers of the other reformed churches . . . there should exist between these doctrines . . . a more beautiful and lovely harmony . . . The *Augsburg Confession* was not written that it should contradict the doctrine of the other reformed churches, but only popish errors . . . And the reformed churches attest in public writings that they, in accord with the *Augsburg Confession,* submit to the same Word of God and understand it according to the intrinsic interpretation . . . which is explicitly established in the *Repetition* and other [Melanchthonian] writings.[143]

Here, then, are the marks of the German Reformed Church—the appeal to Melanchthon as "the distinguished teacher of the Augsburg doctrine;" the attempt to undercut the authenticity of Gnesio Lutheranism by describing Melanchthonianism as "the first and oldest" doctrine; and the warm proposal for doctrinal harmony with the Reformed churches on the basis of—what?—the *Variata.* The *Nassau Confession* affirmed three doctrinal norms—the *Variata,* the *Apology* and Melanchthon's *Saxon Confession.*[144] And the doctrine of the Lord's Supper was quoted from the *Frankfort Recess.*[145] Is it not misleading,

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[141] Practical factors also contributed to unity: intermarriage, the fact that Heidelberg and Hems assumed the leadership, the wide currency of the *Heidelberg Catechism,* the work of Olevianus, Dathenus, and Ursinus.
[142] Heppe, *Bekenntnisschriften der reformirten Kirchen,* p. *xii;* pp. 70 f.
[143] Doubtless the *Repetition* intended was Melanchthon's *Saxon Confession* (1551) which was cited as a doctrinal norm.
[144] Heppe, *Bekenntnisschriften der reformirten Kirchen,* p. 71.
[145] Ibid, p. 80. Compare: Heppe, *Bekenntnisschriften der altprot. Kirche,* p. 570.

therefore, to write, as someone has,[146] that the *Nassau Confession* "completed the introduction of the Reformed faith?"

One after another, the German Reformed confessions appeared. The *Anhalt Repetition (1581)* affirmed the *Variata* as the chief norm of doctrine.[147] In *1584*, the *Heidelberg Repetition*[148] was republished against (what the Preface calls) the *Flacio-Brentianische Hauf.*[149] The pro-Reformed *Bremen Consensus (1595)* executed the policy of evangelical harmony by citing both Melanchthonian and Reformed Doctrinal norms from the *Augsburg Confession* to the *Decades* of Bullinger.[150] *The Hessian Catechism* (1607) was based upon the *Variata* and explicitly condemned the "hard [predestinarian] terms employed by others."[151] The *Brandenburg Confession* (1614) announced the dramatic repudiation of Gnesio Lutheranism in that important electorate, decisive assistance having been given from Heidelberg.[152] In his own *Private Confession* of the same year, Elector John Sigismund made exclusive subscription to

> the *Augsburg Confession* which was presented to the Emperor Charles V by the Protestant princes and estates in the year 1530, and afterwards significantly studied and improved [i.e., the *Variata*].[153]

Each of these confessions brought to doctrinal reality the full significance of the name, "German Reformed."

CONCLUSION

Such is the history of our first epoch. To what ideals does this heritage commit us?

We are suited to be and committed to be the matrix for unity between the German and the Reformed branches of the Reformation. Melanchthon was the first link between the two communions; and the German Reformed Church, wherein Reformed doctrine was modified by the *gemütlichkeit* of

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[146] Good, *Origin of the Reformed Church in Germany*, p. 258.
[147] Heppe, *Die Bekenntnisschriften der reformirten Kirchen*, p. 23.
[148] I.e., *Augspurgischer Confession, der selben Apologia, and Repetition, auch Franckfordischen abscheids lere von Sacramenten.*
[149] Heppe, *Die confessionelle Entwicklung*, p. 409.
[150] Heppe, *Die Bekenntnisschriften der reformirten Kirchen*, pp. 148
[151] *Ibid*, pp. 247, 249.
[152] *Ibid, pp. 262-283.* Based upon the *Confession of the Heidelberg Theologians* (1607): *Ibid*, pp. 250-261.
[153] *Ibid*, p. 286.

the German Reformation, was organically related to both. The union of the branches is a part of our constitution. In 1817 and in 1934 we were responsive to our heritage.

We are committed to ecumenicity and catholicity. None of the Reformers looked with so much yearning upon the Catholic Church and appeared to be so reluctant to disbelieve in its revivification as Melanchthon. None had a more irenic spirit. None worked harder for reunion. Friedrich Galle wrote that Melanchthon was neither the Peter nor the Paul but the John of the Reformation. He represented peace, unity, catholicity.[154] John Laski was a kindred spirit, who labored both on the continent and in Poland toward unitive Protestantism.[155] And was not the union of German and Reformed the first accomplishment of Protestant ecumenicity?

We are committed to evangelical faith. Melanchthon firmly believed that the indispensable correlative of Tradition is Reformation. For all his deep regard for *consuetudo*, he understood the necessity for abiding reformation.[156] It was a necessity which Frederick III understood and which Philip Schaff recalled "Protestantism runs through the entire history of the Church and will not cease till she is purged completely from all ungodly elements."[157]

We are committed to an elastic, relevant theological development, looking toward the reunion of Christendom. Schaff remarked that Melanchthon's theology was "in perpetual motion"[158]—flexible and progressive, having been developed in public view, having kept pace with the Reformation itself. The German Reformed Church recoiled precisely from the rigidity of orthodoxy and cherished the freedom of theological development. Again, Schaff spoke as a Melanchthonian when he wrote:

> Every age must produce its own theology . . . The theology of the future will be a theology of love, broad as God's love and impartial as God's justice. Such a theology will give new life to the Church and prepare the way for the reunion of Christendom.[159]

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[154] Cf., "Melanchthon and the Present," *Mercersburg Review*, 11/4, p. 335.
[155] On the friendship between Laski and Melanchthon and on Laski's ecumenical spirit, cf., *Opera* II, 563 and 594*f.*
[156] *Melanchthons Opera:* Cr, XIII, 228
[157] *Principle of Protestantism*, p. 180.
[158] *St. Augustin, Melanchthon, Neander*, p. 126.
[159] "Introduction" to *Institutes of the Christian Religion* by E. V. Gerhart, I, xiv-xv.

And whether these pages contain truth or error—for who shall presume to stand in the tradition of the Schaffs and Richardses—we are committed to return often to our foundations, upon which we propose to build.

SHE FOUND IT!

Joseph Bassett

Growing Toward Unity, Volume Six, by Elsabeth Slaughter Hilke, of the *The Livng Theological Heritage of the United Church of Christ* ed. by Barbara Brown Zikmund, Series Editor with a Postscript by Thomas E. Dipko (Cleveland, Ohio: The Pilgrim Press, 2001) pages 784.

This is one delightful tome! The Rev. Dr. Elsabeth Hilke has thoughtfully collected a veritable treasury of complete and important ecumenical texts that inform the United Church of Christ. In her introduction Hilke masterfully spells out the meaning of the much misused word "ecumenical." At the end of the introduction her figure for the ecumenical effort is a journey that transcends boundaries. In a memorable sentence: "The final boundary for the journey is the whole in habited earth, the *oikoumene*," Dr. Hilke deftly sketches part of the ecumenical movement in the United States. Along the way she acknowledges five reoccurring questions. Interestingly these include questions of ministry and baptism but not Eucharist.

The Rev. Dr. Hilke gives us a sense of the hopes for the UCC, the day it was formed in Cleveland, Ohio. Here you will find two hymns written for that occasion on June 27, 1957, as well as the prayers offered. Representatives of the United Church of Canada and the Church of South India were conspicuous on the platform in Cleveland. Hilke sharpens our vague impressions of these ecumenical exemplars with two contemporary commentaries of those church unions, "Real Union in India" (1908) and "Church Union in Canada: An Editorial Interpretation" (1923). Just before Thomas Dipko's Postscript, she has reproduced the cartoon that appeared in Clevland's, *The Plain Dealer* on Thursday, June 27, 1957.

Leading up to the United Church of Christ, Hilke has selected key ecumenical texts from the four constituents of the UCC. The headings

under which she has placed these texts bring out the respective pieties involved: "The Ecumenical Journey of the Congregationalist Churches," "The Christian Passion for Church Union," "The Ecumenical Development of the Reformed Church in the United States," "The Maturing 'Unionist' Vision of the Evangelical Synod." Her choice of the words "journey," "passion," "development" "and maturing vision" are droll as well as significant. Those of us who heard Dr. Hilke's presentation of the "The Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery" (1804) at Craigville Colloquy XX realize how much she enjoys the turns in the ecumenical road. Following her is anything but boring.

In the section on the World Council of Churches we hear the voice of one who served in Geneva. Ms. Hilke defines the moves of that international ecumenical organization with authoritative clarity. Her short post Uppsala General Assembly definition of ecumenism is one of the most hopeful sentences in the book.

Every group, no matter how small, could participate, provided it engaged with one or more groups seeking to overcome barriers caused by politics, economics, culture, or religion.

This sixth volume in the United Church of Christ's *Living Theological Heritage* collection provides glimpses of famous figures. Names like Washington Gladden, the two Niebuhr brothers, as well as Douglas Horton catch the eye. But the texts they authored and Hilke recovered reveal thinking of these folk not often considered.

Who knew that Gladden offered "A Proposal for Christian Unity" in 1904? "O Master Let Me Walk With Thee," certainly; but "A Proposal for Christian Unity," hardly. Reinhold's 1928 Letter to the Editor of *Theological Magazine of the Evangelical Synod of North America* with "Peter the Hermit's" testy response "Why Go, Why Not Stay?" indicates not everyone in the Synod was facing east. A year later the Rev. Prof. H. R. Niebuhr, Chairman of Committee on Relations with Other Churches, Evangelical Synod of North America made the case for a "Plan of Union" for the "United Church in America." This Niebuhr offered a summary of this plan that included the United Brethern in Christ. Who remembers that plan, and its contribution to the Evangelical and Reformed Church?

In *Douglas Horton and the Ecumenical Impulse in American Religion* Theodore Trost mentions the "Greenwich Plan for a United Church in the United States" drawn up by the Congregational Christians and Disciples of Christ in 1946. The plan was subsequently submitted to at least nine other denominations anticipating the Consultation On Church Unity. Hilke gives us the theological sections of the Greenwich Plan as it had evolved in 1953, thus providing a substantive detail in the Horton story. *Growing Toward Unity* can be used to trace down myriad ideas and persons too often mentioned in passing.

This book is no flash in the pan. Elsabeth Hilke's volume is the lost coin which after searching her home, she found. Now she invites us to celebrate what she has found.

TWO THOUSAND YEARS OF GRACE AND THE CHURCH: HERMENEUTICS IN AN EVANGELICAL AND CATHOLIC TRADITION

F. Christopher Anderson

An Abstract

How does one interpret scripture through ". . . the faith of the historic church expressed in the ancient creeds and reclaimed in the basic insights of the Protestant Reformers?" (Preamble to the Constitution of the United Church of Christ) I show that scholars in the field of hermeneutics are seeing the need to interpret from a tradition. I give an overview of the Post Critical Retrieval Movement. I illustrate how five texts have been interpreted through tradition in the field of spiritual direction. I introduce an Evangelical and Catholic tradition. I give an introduction to how Augustine, Chrysostom, Bernard, Calvin and Barth interpret scripture. I glean twelve common hermeneutical insights from these five interpreters. I explain my own 'pre-understandings' for interpreting scripture. In two case studies I show how interpreting through this tradition differs from how one would interpret using only the historical-critical method. I further illustrate this by a sermon and commentary.

"Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like a master of a household who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old.."

Matthew 13:52

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