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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

Our President, Dr. Norman Kansfield, acted as host for this year's (June, 2004) convocation at New Brunswick Theological Seminary, New Brunswick, New Jersey, on the campus of Rutgers University. The stated topic was "The Practice of the Mystical Presence: Moving Beyond the Concept."

Although, as the title suggests, the emphasis was on the practical applications of eucharistic theology, still we enjoyed both an academic, sociological presentation, as well as a more pastoral one. Dr. Anne Thiel Thayer provided a theoretically rich study, comparing Calvin and Nevin according to the model of symbol and power in society as proposed by Dr. Christopher Elwood. For our practical grist, Dr. Timothy J. Mulder, took us from "the table to the sidewalk."

To fully appreciate Dr. Thayer's paper, she helpfully realized it necessary to familiarize us with the thesis of Elwood, which simply stated, argues for the relatedness of the temporal sign and transcendent object, the temporal instrument and divine power, and the holy community and social transformation. Having given us a working understanding of Elwood, Thayer brought us to her thesis that the connection between eucharistic elements and Christ, produces the power to shape community for social transformation.

She continued by providing the relevant historical findings of Elwood from the time of the Reformation, so that we could grasp by way of the use of symbols, the enormous change the Reformation and within it, Calvinism, brought to society. She then turned to her own, original scholarship, comparing Calvin and Nevin on the question of the symbolic power of the Eucharist, showing how Nevin sought to correct his 'memorialist' contemporaries' over-rationalization of Eucharist, whereby the symbol lost its efficacy for change, since the symbol's power was diminished as the temporal sign became detached from the transcendent object.

Ironically, in Prussia, when the mediating theology so influential to Mercersburg was prominent, the Protestant church had already experience a union (1817). The organic relatedness for which Nevin and Schaff longed, was, to some extent, socially manifest in that movement

and certainly contributed to the eucharistic theologies emerging at the same time and eventually impacting Rauch, Schaff and Nevin. In contrast, the Mercersburg theology, which shared so much with the Continent, was never as popular in America. So, Thayer's thesis defies testing in application of Mercersburg within its American context.

In contrast, Reformation Protestants readily applied the new terminology of Calvin, and so experienced the way newly conceived symbols changed European politics. Likewise, such was the case in Prussia at the time of the union and right on through the time Schaff left Germany to come to America. Conversely, the strong detachment of temporal sign and the transcendent object preferred by the memorialist position in most of Protestant America, continued to hold sway in spite of Mercersburg's critique. Perhaps the closest popular movement which resisted the rationalism so objected to by Mercersburg would be the transcendentalist movement. Still, in most ways, these two were worlds apart, certainly in their understanding of the way the transcendent exists in sacred space and time.

One thing is certain, Nevin was adamant in his opposition to Jacksonian democracy. A fascinating study might compliment the work of Elwood and Thayer by studying the way that the symbols in the Mercersburg theology, through their cohesiveness to the transcendent object, might have, had Mercersburg been fully embraced by America, reversed the rampant and unhealthy pluralism Nevin claimed Jacksonian democracy spawned.

Dr. Mulder was given the task to consider some of the practical results of Table fellowship, by asking about the social applications of Eucharist properly celebrated. For example, how might the service at the Table make us of service to the world? And who should be welcomed at the Table?

Certainly, the issue of inclusivity was central to Mulder's paper, and he draws a decidedly different interpretation from Paul's warning in I Corinthians 11 than many. Mulder does not see cause to fence the Table in Paul's admonition, but rather a warning to see to the needs of the Body of Christ. From that perspective, Mulder opens the Table to any and all who need the love and nurture of God. Mulder cannot conceive of denying that priceless treasure to anybody who wants it.

Of course, a fair retort might question where to make the case for

discipline (and many at the Convocation did respond so). Mulder would argue that discipline (or at least the withdrawal of the elements) has no place in Eucharist, which historically was where discipline was (and still is in some quarters) often exercised.

When Mulder likens the "altar call" of say a revivalist church service, to the Anglican invitation, "These are the gifts of God for the people of God. Take them and remember that Christ died for you and feed on him in your hearts by faith with thanksgiving," we get to the heart of his challenge. He asks, is there a difference in these appeals? After all, each is an invitation to receive Christ. Shouldn't we rush to the sidewalks and invite all to the King's banquet? Wouldn't it be a shame for any hungry soul to miss the King's generous feast?

Mulder makes a strong case for Table inclusiveness with these caveats and others like them. But at the same time, accountability is completely absent here. Someone might point, with the New Testament metaphor in mind, to the one who arrived at the wedding feast without a proper garment (Matthew 22:11) and ask, "Are there instances where some behavior dishonors the host?"

Clearly at the level of eucharistic experience which concerns Mulder, i.e., the non-cognitive level or the intuitive level, he seems right on target. What happens at Eucharist is infinitely more than any human conception of it. And starving the spiritually hungry dishonors the Gospel encompassed by Holy Communion. Moreover, as he is clear to point out, we priests are not the host. Let the host decide who is welcome. Furthermore, without dwelling long on this, Mulder is deserved in his indignation of a long history of Table heavy-handedness by the clergy.

However, on the cognitive level, which Mulder makes a good case for being over-emphasized in our tradition but certainly has its place, there is a great deal different in these invitations. Nor should we overlook the fact that meaning emerges without words. Images and urges are created from symbolic action, which can only be described as cognitions: abstract theology, no! Ideas, yes! To describe the non-verbal aspect of Eucharist as non-cognitive, only clouds the issue. Sure the non-verbal is less of a cognitive exercise, but riddled with symbolism, it conveys meaning, and even a small child forms thoughts and impressions in the act of eating and drinking Christ. That would be the case even if the child never thought or said it was eating and drinking Christ. At the point

where both the unsaid and the said meet, purpose converges with feelings. So while the calls to Holy Communion juxtaposed by Mulder, one from his Anglican tradition and the other from the tradition of New Measures revivalism, are, indeed, both an invitation to receive Christ, there is a difference. And the difference is at the core of the Mercersburg theology.

For example, I can be unconscious of my abuse of woman, acting in public like the romantic protector, obviously practicing the worst kind of patriarchalism. I can celebrate Eucharist with my community, and yet unashamedly and without awareness embrace a theology of apartheid. Cognitive dissonance is essential in both these cases, if injustice is to be opposed. And while it may be that the place of discipline is not the Table, on the other hand, given the core concern of justice in the Gospel, it may be that the Table is the only meaningful place for discipline. It remains to be seen where discipline in the church should be required (as opposed to simply appealed for).

Dr. Kansfield's sermon and Dr. Mulder's paper fit hand in glove. Our President's text sets the scene: a dinner party at the home of Simon the Pharisee, where Table fellowship is at question in the view Simon holds of Jesus. Of course, Simon's issue is whether Jesus is a prophet. Funny, though, that's not Jesus' issue at all! He's clearly more concerned about Simon's opinion of the broken-hearted, penitent woman who pours her heart out to Jesus and by virtue of that unspoken act of penitence and love, raises the question of Simon's opinion of himself. When Kansfield puts in Jesus' mind the questions whether Simon knows how deeply he is forgiven and how deeply he is loved, we find ourselves compelled by Kansfield's homiletic and Mulder's appeal: let the Table feed God's hungry people!

The Reverend Martha Kriebel assured us that everybody was thinking together about the topic of eucharistic practice. Her sermon touched on the other speakers' issues of the openness of the Table, and specifically of Mulder's advocacy of the virtue of a non-verbal experience in Table fellowship. As if previously choreographed, Mulder's themes of nurture and silence at Table were applied as Kansfield touched on Christ's desire to share love and healing, and as Kriebel spoke movingly about the healing power of silence.

Finally, Dr. Gabriel Fackre shared with us a review of the new book by a society member and frequent speaker at our convocations, Dr. Alan Sell.

From the sound of this review, it's really a must have! The breadth of scholarship appears amazing, as Fackre testifies. I am intrigued by and will be anxious to read of Sell's (with Fackre concurring) belief that the Mercersburg founders might have beefed-up their doctrine of the atonement. I expect that is because any juridically styled theory of the atonement would have clashed with Mercersburg's theory of real, felt organic unity between Christ and believer, as the means to all the benefits of the incarnation. Judgment (no pun intended) should be reserved, however, as Fackre does not go into detail on this score. This, however, is only another among many reasons to encourage the theologically minded to dig deep and voraciously into Sell's new book.

EUCHARIST, POWER AND COMMUNITY: A VIEW FROM CALVIN AND NEVIN

Anne T. Thayer

What role does the Eucharist play in the formation of communities, both ecclesiastical communities and political communities? This is an enormous question, and one on which I freely admit that I do not have a God's eye view. And yet it has come to my attention in recent months, as I have been reading, worshiping, teaching Christian doctrine, and listening to the news. In the face of war and dissension, we find ourselves aching for deep and public community. We long for the sense that we are living a common life that leads to our fulfillment. Many Christians (especially those in the Mercersburg tradition) suspect that the Eucharist has an important role to play in bringing such community about. But at the same time, many Christians disagree about what that community should look like and how the Eucharist should be approached.

Early this spring, we learned that some Roman Catholic bishops did not believe that John Kerry should be given the Eucharist because of his support for abortion rights. More recently, the bishop of Colorado Springs said that Roman Catholics who vote for politicians who favor abortion rights seriously jeopardize their salvation. Those who keep an eagle eye on religious organizations responded by saying that if these bishops try to influence the outcome of elections then the church may lose its tax-exempt status. Here we see Eucharistic participation being used to form a particular type of community with ramifications for the wider society.

Within our churches, the Eucharist is often called the "sacrament of unity," yet we know that historically it has been very divisive. A relatively new development is the enthusiasm found in many places today for the "open table," where all stripes of Christian believers, and sometimes those of other religions as well, are exhorted to come to "Christ's table." It is asserted that this will build a community of respect, love and tolerance. This is the case despite living in a culture where many American families often don't sit down to dinner together. Even so,

shared meals continue to serve as symbols of community.¹ Does the Eucharist really have the public symbolic force today to create genuine community?

This, of course, is not a new question. Historian that I am, today I want to bring into our contemporary conversation understandings gained from John Calvin and sixteenth-century France, and John Williamson Nevin and nineteenth-century America. Both the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries were enthusiastic about individual and social sanctification. Indeed we might even extend that claim to our own century, noting the efforts expended for political correctness and social transformation. War is found in all three contexts—the French Wars of Religion, the US Civil War and the current "War against Terror." The Eucharist was central to the public theological discourse of the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries; it remains to be seen whether it will be so for our own century.

I will first turn to the question of Eucharist and community in the sixteenth century, following the excellent analysis provided by Christopher Elwood in his 1999 study, *The Body Broken: The Calvinist Doctrine of the Eucharist and Symbolization of Power in Sixteenth-Century France*. Focusing on the relationship between sign and signified in Eucharistic teaching, Elwood compares how Catholics and French Protestants differently configured the relationship between divine and temporal power in ways that shaped and ruptured the social fabric of France. Then I will turn to Nevin and his classic work, *The Mystical Presence*,² with an eye toward similar issues. In a context of religious pluralism, how could the church be the motive force of history? Nevin believed that the key lay in the objective presence of Christ's life in the Eucharist. And finally, I hope we can discuss together the contemporary symbolic force of the Eucharist and our own need for community. This paper is built around an insight from Elwood, namely that within the

¹ In this paper, I am following Christopher Elwood's definition of symbols as contextually embedded devices that organize perception, facilitate conceptualization, convey meaning and value, elicit human responses, create social worlds, and regulate communal life. Christopher Elwood, *The Body Broken: The Calvinist Doctrine of the Eucharist and Symbolization of Power in Sixteenth-Century France* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 7.

² John W. Nevin, *The Mystical Presence and Other Writings on the Eucharist*, Bard Thompson and George H. Bricker, eds. (Philadelphia: United Church Press, 1966).

Reformed tradition, three things work together—the relationship between temporal sign and transcendent signified, the parallel relationship between temporal instruments of power and the divine power in which they are grounded, and the ideal of a holy community that incorporates a mandate for social transformation.³ Thus my overarching thesis is that the real connection asserted between the elements of the Eucharist and the presence of Christ by both Calvin and Nevin is understood to convey the power to form the faith community and shape the wider society.

In sixteenth-century France there were two competing worldviews incorporating claims about the Eucharist, power and community. The Roman Catholic view had developed during the later Middle Ages and would come to be re-entrenched in the sixteenth century. The Eucharist was at the center of the symbol system that focused the social and political order. As Elwood says, “the Eucharist was the central symbol defining power in the late medieval and early modern periods.” It was the “preeminent locus of divine power within the Christian’s world of experience.”⁴ When the priest said the words of consecration, it was affirmed that Christ became physically present in the elements of bread and wine, replacing their essential “breadness” and “wineness.” This was a miracle that ensured the presence of God in the world, and brought spiritual and physical health to those who regarded it with honor and occasionally received it. The Eucharist was understood as the principle vehicle for creating unity in the church, for building the body of Christ.

The Eucharist was also understood to be the foundation of secular society, built in continuity with the heavenly community. As Christ was the head of the church as his body, and the various parts of the body were cooperatively ordered, so social harmony was grounded in divine power present in this world via Eucharist and king. Power itself was understood to be unitary—divine and secular power were simply different aspects of the same thing. From investiture controversy of the 11th century forward, royal partisans saw the anointing of a king as making him like Christ, able to exercise power, having by grace the dignity of the divine nature. They claimed that the rite of anointing worked *ex opere operato*, making divine power to dwell in something ordinary that appeared unchanged to the senses.

³ Elwood, p. 166

⁴ Elwood, p. 4

In the later Middle Ages, processions for the feast of *Corpus Christi* deliberately blended religious and royal symbolism, affirming a eucharistically grounded social order.⁵ Those most important in society marched closest to the host that was carried beneath the royal *fleur de lis* canopy. While not all members of a given community walked in the procession, there is no evidence that people rejected its social symbolism. The festival strengthened the ideal of the social body harmoniously honoring Christ’s body present among them in the host. As Elwood explains, “for most communities, the model of social wholeness, order, and concord derived from the mystical body that has Christ as its head served as an eminently profitable means of constituting the community and establishing the common good.”⁶

Thus the ways of talking about the Eucharist and the ways of talking about temporal power were intertwined and grounded in popular Eucharistic practices.⁷ Furthermore, French kings portrayed themselves as enthusiastic supporters of the Eucharistic cult. By the end of the Middle Ages, the Eucharist had moved from a parochial and spiritual symbol to one full of public and political meaning. It represented power, order and sacredness precisely because the body and blood of Christ were understood to be immanently present in the consecrated elements.

This established model was vigorously challenged by Calvin and other French reformers. Their vernacular writings created a public theological discourse that very quickly came to center on the Eucharist, especially on Christ’s mode of presence within it. As they challenged the immanent presence brought about by transubstantiation as so much idolatry (worshipping a “god of paste”), they also challenged the Eucharistic glue holding together the existing social order. In this polemical context, several key Reformed themes emerged quite early, setting the terms of Reformed teaching on power, presence and community formation. First, Christ’s body is in heaven; it is not to be sought in earthly things. It is a real human body, thus located in one place.⁸ Second, God’s power is free and unconstrained; it cannot be manipulated by the words of a priest or

⁵ Elwood, p. 20

⁶ Elwood, p. 21

⁷ Elwood, p. 23

⁸ Elwood, p. 43

captured in a host.⁹ Transcendent majesty was seen as the essence of divinity.¹⁰ Early Reformed writings stressed the distinction between visible and invisible, earthly and heavenly, material and spiritual, the sign and the signified. They urged readers not to get stuck on what one perceives with the senses (the elements), but to focus on the spiritual reality instead.¹¹ This was very much at odds with the dominant worldview in which the divine was immanent within the temporal. Even though the Reformers urged obedience to temporal authorities, their teachings contained great potential for social disruption.

Calvin was the dominant theological voice for French Protestantism. As he articulated his views in French and in Latin, other also picked them up and popularized them. In 1541, he published in French his first treatise devoted just to the Eucharist, entitled *Short Treatise on the Holy Supper of our Lord Jesus Christ*. He also discussed in the topic in his *Institutes*, *Genevan Catechism*, and *Form of Ecclesiastical Prayers and Songs*. Calvin's approach to the Supper focuses on the relationship between the communion elements on earth and Christ's body and blood in heaven. He wants to persuade his audience that there is a "true" but not "local" presence of Christ in the sacrament. He does this via a theory of sacramental signs.¹²

Following the lead of Augustine, Calvin distinguishes between the sign (*signum*) in a sacrament and the thing or matter (*res*) of the sacrament.¹³ In his *Short Treatise*, Calvin distinguishes between the outward visible sign and the invisible matter, reality or truth of the sacrament. He says,

[T]he nature of the sacrament requires that the material bread remain as [a] visible sign of the body. For it is a general rule for all sacraments that the signs which we see bear some likeness to the spiritual things they figure. As then in Baptism we have assurance of the internal washing of our souls when the water, which cleanses our bodily filth, is given us for attestation; so in the Supper there must be material bread to testify to us that the body of Christ is our food. For otherwise what meaning could

there be in whiteness figuring this for us? We see clearly, then, how the whole representation which the Lord wished to give in condescension to our infirmity is lost unless the bread truly remains.¹⁴

Further, in the *Institutes* (perhaps, 1541) Calvin avers,

When we deny that the bread which is eaten in the Supper is the body of Christ we do not by any means seek to diminish the communication of the body which is offered to the faithful there. But we only wish to teach that it is necessary to distinguish the thing represented from its sign.¹⁵

Calvin believes that too many Eucharistic practices of his day merge the spiritual and the material rather than making the appropriate distinction between them. Thus they do not properly understand the efficacy of the sacrament or understand how the power at work through it constitutes community.¹⁶ Those who teach transubstantiation deny Christ's true humanity by claiming that his body can be many places at once; they further deny his divinity by "abas[ing] him under the corruptible elements of the world."¹⁷ Calvin's goal in his teaching was to eliminate the claim of a local presence, but maintain the claim of an efficacious sacrament, "genuinely making possible the communion with Christ's body and blood."¹⁸ According to Calvin, if transubstantiation were to take place, there would no longer be a sacrament as the sign is gone, replaced by a bodily presence.

Because he challenged a key point of established theology in rejecting the corporeal presence of Christ in the Supper, Calvin spent a great deal of time and energy refuting the charge that the Eucharist is not efficacious in his teaching. All of his writings claim that the substance of Christ's body is conveyed to communicants. Against Zwingli, Calvin argued that participation in the sacrament was more than a badge of

¹⁴ John Calvin, *Joannis Calvini Opera Selecta*, ed. Peter Barth, Wilhelm Niesel, and Dora Scheuner, 5 vols. (Munich, 1926-1962), I:520f., quoted in Elwood, p. 64.

¹⁵ John Calvin, *Institution de la religion chrestienne* (1541), ed. Jacques Pannier, 5 vols. (Paris, 1961), 4:18, quoted in Elwood, p. 62.

¹⁶ Elwood, p. 63.

¹⁷ Calvin, *Opera Selecta*, I:521f., quoted in Elwood, p. 64.

¹⁸ Elwood, p. 63.

⁹ Elwood, p. 46.

¹⁰ Elwood, p. 47.

¹¹ Elwood, p. 46.

¹² Elwood, p. 57.

¹³ Elwood, p. 62.

faith.¹⁹ He argues that the bread and wine are not naked or empty signs, but really do communicate Christ's body and blood.²⁰ The *Genevan Catechism* says Christ "makes us partakers of his own substance so as to unite us in one life with himself."²¹ His liturgy encourages congregants not to "doubt that by this sacrament Jesus gives us his body and his blood so that we may live in him and he in us."²²

Such claims put pressure on his insistence that sign and matter in the sacraments be distinguished. As Elwood says,

For while representational language is a useful tool for opposing the notion that the elements themselves become the reality of the sacrament, when it comes to expressing the actual manner in which that reality is present it is somewhat deficient. What the reader seems to have to understand in interpreting Calvin is, then, that as signs the sacraments are *sui generis*. Sacramental signs are unlike any other kind of sign with which we are familiar because they do not simply bring into one's consciousness the thing signified; they in some way communicate the truth or substance of the thing.²³

This will prove to be a point where Nevin will try to strengthen Calvin.

Even if the signs do not have power immanent in them, the Eucharist is still a powerful transaction. Christ is made present by the power of the Holy Spirit.²⁴ The elements are the instruments used by the power of God, joining things together that are spatially separated, namely believers on earth and Christ in heaven.²⁵ Elwood claims that this teaching is a hallmark of Calvinist doctrine. He writes,

Calvin invokes instrumentality as a way of distinguishing sacramental signs from the communicative power that proceeds from and is the exclusive prerogative of God. The signs are efficacious not because of an inherent capacity but in the sense

¹⁹ Elwood, p. 67

²⁰ Elwood, p. 66

²¹ Elwood, p. 67

²² Calvin, *Opera Selecta*, 2:43, quoted in Elwood, p. 67

²³ Elwood, p. 68

²⁴ Elwood, p. 69

²⁵ Elwood, p. 70

that they are instruments God has chosen to attest to the genuine operation of the Spirit's power to unite believers with the body of Christ. In keeping with traditional conceptions of the sacrament, then, the notion of divine power remains a prominent feature, while every hint of the physical sign being imbued with power is removed. With such a dynamic understanding of the relationship of signs to their efficacy, Calvin intended to maintain the notion of the Supper as an efficacious symbol in which the body of Christ is truly offered to the faithful, while safeguarding the idea of the Spirit's transcendent power as the efficient cause of this communication.²⁶

Along with this insistence on divine activity comes a stress on the faith of the recipient as the vehicle for the reception of the grace available in the sacrament. Elwood finds that in writings for a popular readership, the stress on reception by faith had the effect to "to deflect attention away from the liturgical sacramental act and toward the believer's cognitive and affective state."²⁷ Guillaume Farel, for instance, writes that the real miracle of the Eucharist is not a change in its elements, but the change that God accomplishes in the lives of Christians.²⁸ Indeed, "subjectively experienced transformations . . . provided the warrant for the objective efficacy of the sacrament."²⁹ Despite claims to the contrary, this tended to diminish the understanding of the Eucharist as a powerful and objective means of delivering grace.

So what does this have to do with the formation of communities? By asserting that the Eucharistic elements are simply instruments without subsistent virtue, Calvin reconfigures the way divine power works in the world with implications for thinking about the relationship between the divine and social orders.³⁰ When power is seen in the temporal world, it is being exercised via instruments. The king is not sacred. The social order is not sacred. Persons, things and institutions do not embody sacred power, but merely exercise it as God ordains.³¹

²⁶ Elwood, p. 71

²⁷ Elwood, p. 110. Here Elwood is evaluating works by Farel, Beza and Viret.

²⁸ Elwood, p. 91

²⁹ Elwood, p. 109

³⁰ Elwood, p. 74

³¹ Elwood, p. 75

Both Catholics and Reformed saw the Eucharist as an essential bond of unity, providing reconciliation between people. But, as Elwood explains, French Protestants could not conceive of the social body prospering when the sacrament was turned into an instrument of idolatry. Catholics could not envisage the survival of society if Christ was not acknowledged to be immanent in the Eucharistic elements, and they regarded Protestant charges of idolatry as no more than an attempt to destroy the sacrament, expel from the realm all media of divine grace and power and overturn the social order. In communities whose members could not subscribe to a common understanding of the Eucharist, then, the sacred center lost its integrative and unifying capacity and no longer could resist the centrifugal forces threatening to issue in social chaos.³²

Thus there comes to be no middle ground, no politically tenable room for compromise. The French Wars of Religion arise as these modes of understanding the Eucharistic symbol and the action of power in society collide. Catholic polemical literature exploits "The Troubles," as well as conflict in Germany, to show that tampering with the doctrine of the Eucharist produced discord, dissension and violence. When riots and military engagements began, a Catholic, Gentian Hervet, took aim at Protestant Eucharistic doctrine.

The aim of the Protestants, Hervet claimed, was to bring an end to the Catholic religion, "to drive the king from his kingdom and to kill all the priests." The particular strategy they employed was to destroy "this firm faith that the precious body and blood of Jesus Christ which is offered to God by the church for the sins of the living and the dead, the priest being the minister, is really and in fact the Eucharist." Having "persuaded many in this kingdom" that Christ is not really in the sacrament, they "have caused them to take up arms against their prince and against the whole church."³³

Such writers went on to use the image of the body of Christ to call for the amputation of diseased members.³⁴

In contrast, Reformed tracts did not specify the connection between

Eucharist and political commitments—this would only have made them more vulnerable to charges of sedition.³⁵ But the dots were there to be connected. As Elwood puts it, "Something basic to Reformed teaching—the iconoclastic impulse expressed in strictures on idolatry and given its most potent symbolism in the denial of Christ's bodily presence in the Eucharist—produced an obstacle to their rendering homage to any temporal sovereign."³⁶ Calvin himself was politically conservative, urging obedience to the authorities in place. But, after his death, Reformed theologians worked out a theology of resistance to tyranny based on the idea that only God deserves absolute obedience. The roots of such teaching can be found in Calvin's sacramental claims, according to Elwood.

The Calvinist doctrine of sacramental signification with its criticism of the notion that power might inhere in temporal loci may be seen as a paradigm upon which criticisms of political authority might be based.

In addition, because of their wide dissemination in vernacular print, Reformed Eucharistic ideas were

actually in a position to influence directly public discourse and popular understandings of the sacred, society, and the nature of temporal power.³⁷

The Reformed social ideal was the communion of saints. Those who participate in the Lord's Supper, the sharing of Christ's body and blood, are joined together into the mystical body of Christ.³⁸ While this fundamentally shapes the church, its effects should extend beyond the church to yield social integration and order in society. As Elwood explains,

Society, as the Reformed experienced it, was not in any sense sacred; in fact, as a reflection of the fallen human beings who constituted the secular community, it was believed to be naturally chaotic and resistant to the kind of ordering the Spirit imposed on the church through the sacrament of Christ's supper.

³² Elwood, p. 112, citing Gentian Hervet, *Discours sur ce que les pilleurs voleurs*, ff. D2r-v.

³³ Elwood, p. 140

³⁴ Elwood, p. 138

³⁵ Elwood, p. 139

³⁶ Elwood, p. 140

³⁷ Elwood, p. 147

³⁸ Elwood, p. 148

Nevertheless, profane society might be remade to reflect the divine redemption of life and so provide a suitable context for the community of the faithful and a place in which all lives might serve to glorify God.³⁹

Such a change could be wrought naturally by the cumulative effect of changed lives, but Calvinists also urged explicit efforts on the part of individuals and communities to bring about social sanctification.⁴⁰

The primary tool for creating the communion of saints was the liturgy, including the fencing of the table. It was understood to be "essential to the right ordering of worship and the life of the community" to exclude the manifestly unworthy. Elwood again:

This derived from the judgment of Calvin and his colleagues in ministry that the liturgical act of communion at Christ's table must serve as a faithful and genuine reflection of the mystical body that was actually constituted through the instrument of the sacrament. The symbolic efficacy of this meal of common union in Christ, that is, the capacity of the Supper to truly represent the unity of Christ's body, would be compromised if the ignorant, the faithless, and unrepentant sinners shared the meal with believers⁴¹ . . . This would profane the sacrament and dishonor God. It would also scandalize the faithful. How could the sacrament bringing about the union of saints with Christ fail to discriminate between saints and sinners?⁴²

Thus the Eucharist was understood to define the boundaries of holy community. It served as the symbolic center of the Reformed project of ecclesiastical discipline. Those who needed rebuke should accept it and reform their lives, subsequently living in harmony as one body. Those who resisted repentance were expelled from church.

Thus the ecclesial community marked itself off from the broader society that included both the faithful and the unregenerate by attempting, within certain limits, to maintain itself as a society of the saints, and it employed the social symbol of the Eucharist as

³⁹ Elwood, p. 148

⁴⁰ Elwood, p. 149

⁴¹ Elwood, p. 149

⁴² Elwood, p. 150

the table of Christ and persuasive and coercive techniques centered about this symbol to achieve that end.⁴³

The power to discipline did not extend beyond the church, so where French Protestants lived under Catholic rulers, they could not influence social sanctity directly. But where Protestants were in civic leadership, they could do more. As Elwood explains,

Since the Reformed believed it to be the duty of magistrates to support religion and promote the civil righteousness conducive to its welfare, secular rulers were called upon to employ their powers of coercion in attempting to create a social body that might aspire to correspond to the order of peace and righteousness that prevailed in Christ's spiritual kingdom.⁴⁴

Thus Eucharistic teaching shapes Reformed ideas about the nature of church and society. The Supper becomes a symbol of social holiness contrasting with representations of society defiled by the idolatry of the mass. Whereas it had unified and integrated wider society in the later Middle Ages, it became a badge of religious group identification. This necessarily weakened the overarching ties of French society.⁴⁵ French Calvinists came to see themselves as aliens in the land; Catholic efforts at extirpation confirmed this sense.

Thus while Calvin exhorted obedience to rulers, his reworking of sacramental understandings of the relationship between the sign and the signified, his assertion of the transcendence of divine power, and his aim to form a holy body of Christ in the church, when turned loose in the public discourse of sixteenth-century France, ruptured the wider community into competing groups each claiming Eucharistic unity.

Turning now from sixteenth-century France to nineteenth-century America, from Calvin and his Catholic opponents to Nevin and his "Puritan" antagonists, we again find the Eucharist at the center of debates. It is generally acknowledged that Nevin was a faithful reader and presenter of Calvin; I will not try to make that argument here. What I will seek to do is to point out that differences in context mean that similar assertions now have different resonances and implications. As the

⁴³ Elwood, p. 150

⁴⁴ Elwood, p. 150

⁴⁵ Elwood, p. 153

Catholics were to Calvin, so Nevin was to many of his American contemporaries. Some of the developments that Calvin encouraged in the sixteenth century now seem to Nevin to need to be reined in. Both Calvin and Nevin taught a potent but non-localized relationship between the bread and wine and the body and blood of Christ. While Calvin had tried to keep the two separate in the face of the Roman Catholic insistence on a corporal presence in the elements, Nevin tries to assert a real relationship between them in the face of Puritan memorialism. Calvin was accused of being rationalistic and destroying true community; Nevin accused his opponents of rationalism and being content with a mechanically or externally, rather than organically (internally), created community. Both discuss the Eucharist in terms of how God's power is present and operative in the world, with Calvin stressing divine transcendence and Nevin highlighting the incarnational life of Christ. Thus the connection asserted between Christ and the elements of the Eucharist is again key to understanding the formation of community.

As in sixteenth-century France, theology in nineteenth-century America was a matter of public debate. Nevin sought to respond to public circumstances and events.⁴⁶ As Richard Wentz has said about Nevin's theology, "It is incarnational thought, therefore public theology, public discourse."⁴⁷ Wentz also pointed out, that Nevin was doing theology in the company of strangers, as there were so many religious options in America.⁴⁸ While Nevin was convinced that the church was the engine of history, carrying it forward to the eschaton and its own fulfillment, he saw little in his contemporary setting that obviously confirmed this conviction. Rather than a common body, the church seemed to be splintered into self-selected groups that had little sense of the whole, stressing private judgment instead. On a national political level, internal tensions were rising toward war.

⁴⁶ In Nevin's inaugural address upon taking up a teaching position at Lancaster Theological Seminary, he expressed the hope that the German Reformed churches in Pennsylvania might form a buffer zone between the North and the South as they became increasingly polarized in the decades prior to the Civil War. "Addresses at the Inauguration of Professor John W. Nevin" (pamphlet), 1840, p. 26.

⁴⁷ Richard E. Wentz, *John Williamson Nevin: American Theologian* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 51.

⁴⁸ Wentz, p. 51.

In this context Nevin writes passionately on the Eucharist, seeing it as the vehicle by which the new creation begun in the Incarnation continues to come into history. Could this provide the "symbolic reality" that a public faith needed to transcend, in Wentz's words, "the rational judgments and demands of its variegated constituency"?⁴⁹ Such a symbolic reality would need to be presented in "lyrical" language, able to move people, to call them beyond themselves, to provide hope, more than offering argumentation or information. Wentz writes,

The lyrical speech, according to John Nevin, is the language of the mystical presence, of mystical union; it is hope brought to public expression by the life of the church in its liturgy and its sacraments. It is language about 'a covenant between a personal God and a community' that is greater than the sum of its parts, of a reality that is more than private individuals separately or collectively considered.⁵⁰

Nevin introduces *The Mystical Presence* by asserting the centrality of his subject to the great questions of contemporary life.

As the Eucharist forms the very heart of the whole Christian worship, so it is clear that the entire question of the church, which all are compelled to acknowledge—the great life problem of the age—centers ultimately in the sacramental question as its inmost heart and core.⁵¹

As we see the Eucharist, avers Nevin, so we will understand our age. Nevin then proceeds to argue that many American Christians have fallen away from a faithful understanding of the sacrament as expounded by Calvin in the sixteenth century, adumbrated by the early church Fathers, and ultimately taught in Scripture. His great hope is that by laying out sound teaching, people will understand how God works in the world and will lay aside the crippling privatism, utilitarianism, and subjectivism of American religion. Thus the way may be opened for the public growth of the kingdom of God.⁵² Because everything truly spiritual will seek an external form, according to Nevin, a community of faith living in Christ

⁴⁹ Wentz, p. 53.

⁵⁰ Wentz, p. 57.

⁵¹ Nevin, p. 23.

⁵² Wentz, p. 127, 146.

will transform the political community in which it is embedded.⁵³

As we turn to Nevin's writing in *The Mystical Presence*, we do well to note that the community Nevin has in mind is that of the church catholic. He is not so much interested in the community life of particular congregations (though as an educator of pastors, that was no doubt never far from his mind), or of the German Reformed Church (though he valued its particularity), or of the broader Reformed family of churches (though he thought orthodoxy in this part of the world depended significantly on their health), but in the church—the church as a divine creation within history stretching from the Apostles to the eschaton, the church that “lives in the world as a mystical presence that illuminates the public dimensions of existence.”⁵⁴ In this, Nevin is like his sixteenth-century forebears, looking at the large picture of how society should be formed. He is hopeful that the United States will be the theater in which a new unfolding of the divine in history will take place.⁵⁵ Thus he is always contrasting his vision of the church to the pseudo-communities of the sects he sees around him.

Let us begin with symbolic signification. As Elwood claimed for the sixteenth century, the “problem common to all Reformed articulations of Eucharistic doctrine [is] to demonstrate how God's grace can be effective through signs that never become one with the signified reality.”⁵⁶ Nevin takes up this theme with great vigor, but he does so, not against a Catholic assertion of local unity between sign and signified, but against what he sees as the dominant American denial of any connection between Christ and the elements. Nevin asserts that in the Eucharist there

is a *real* presence, in opposition to the notion that Christ's flesh and blood are not made present to the communicant in *any* way; a *spiritual* real presence, in opposition to the idea that Christ's body is in the elements in a local or corporal manner.⁵⁷

Nevin returns to Calvin's use of Augustine in discussing how sign and signified are related, affirming both their distinction and their

⁵³ Nevin, p. 26

⁵⁴ Wentz, p. 58

⁵⁵ Wentz, p. 146

⁵⁶ Elwood, p. 88

⁵⁷ Nevin, p. 37

conjunction. He writes,

[Calvin] does, to be sure, say of the signs that they have no virtue or force in themselves as such. Augustine says the same thing. But both Calvin and Augustine hold the transaction to be more than what falls upon the senses. In this view, it is held to be truly and properly the form under which and by which—through the Spirit—Christ is made present.⁵⁸

Nevin insists that distinguishing between sign and signified properly preserves the real connection with Christ. In the second part of his treatise, Nevin contrasts the Puritan view with the Reformation view, insisting on the objective character of the sacrament.

The grace of the sacrament comes from God; but it comes as such under the sacrament as its true and proper form; not inhering in the elements indeed, outwardly considered; but still mysteriously lodged, by the power of the Holy Spirit, in the sacramental transaction as a whole.⁵⁹

This same comparative section gives insight not just into Nevin's own understanding, but also into the mid-nineteenth-century public life of the Eucharistic symbol. It reveals the way the Lord's Supper played in public theological discourse, the resonances it had for many. For instance, it is viewed as “full of interest, significance, and power,” but is not a “mystery” or a “miracle.”⁶⁰ It instructs as a similitude or picture.⁶¹ It excites moral cooperation with Christ, but does not convey the substance of Christ's life to the believer.⁶² It focuses on the divinity of Christ and his spiritual presence, but tends to underplay his humanity.⁶³ In general, it promotes pious thought and feeling.⁶⁴

How did such subjectivity arise, if Calvin had taught otherwise? According to Nevin, while Rome stressed the authority of the general over the individual, the objective over subjective, Protestants moved in

⁵⁸ Nevin, p. 54

⁵⁹ Nevin, pp. 108-9

⁶⁰ Nevin, p. 107

⁶¹ Nevin, p. 110

⁶² Nevin, p. 112

⁶³ Nevin, p. 114

⁶⁴ Nevin, p. 115

the opposite direction. In stressing the need for faith to make the objective in the sacrament become personally effective, the reformers sought to be more faithful to scriptural revelation. But this led to a declining confidence in the reliability of the objective divine presence in the sacrament and by the eighteenth century, many rational Protestants had no expectation of supernatural participation. And so Nevin claims,

Rationalism is too *spiritual* to make much account of outward forms and services in any sort of religion. All must be resolved into the exercises of the worshiper's own mind. . . . The sacraments, of course, become signs and signs *only*. Any power they may have is not to be found in *them*, but altogether in such use merely as a pious soul may be able to make of them, as *occasions* for quickening its own devout thoughts and feelings.⁶⁵

In terms of the analysis Elwood has provided, this means that between the sixteenth and the nineteenth centuries, the connection that Calvin sought to articulate between the sign and the signified in the Eucharist did not hold. The objective was lost as the subjective appropriation focused on the signs was elevated. This perceived weakness is confirmed by Nevin's attempt to improve on Calvin in the section entitled "An Attempt to Place the Doctrine in Its Proper Scientific Form." Nevin says that Calvin's insistence that Christ's body is located in heaven while at the same time maintaining that it is the source of the new life conveyed to Christians, calls for a "violent and awkward" need to get spatially separated entities together. "No wonder," Nevin says, "that men of less dialectic subtlety than the great theologian himself, were at a loss to make anything out of such a seeming contradiction in terms."⁶⁶ Calvin relied on the miraculous energy of the Holy Spirit to ensure a real participation in Christ by connecting believers with Christ's flesh, enabling them to participate by faith in its "vivific virtue." Nevin thinks it makes more sense to talk instead about faith inserting one into the life of Christ and thus receiving "the organic law of Christ's human life," an organizing principle shaping growth, which doesn't require spatial proximity.⁶⁷ He is trying to express the connection between sign and signified in a way that will convey the effectiveness of divine power

more satisfactorily.

In part three of *The Mystical Presence*, when Nevin most straightforwardly states his understanding of the sacrament, he insists that grace is objectively present and returns to the language of signs.

The sign and the thing signified are, by Christ's institution, mysteriously bound together, so as to form in the sacramental transaction one and the same presence. Not as though the last were in any way included in the first, as its local or material receptacle. The conjunction is in no sense such as to change at all the nature of the sensible sign, in itself considered, or to bring it into any physical union with the grace it represents. But still the two form one presence. Along with the outward sign, is exhibited always at the same time the represented grace. The union of the one with the other is mystical, and peculiar altogether to the nature of a sacrament; but it is not for this reason *less* real, but only a great deal *more* real than it could be possibly under any natural and local form.⁶⁸

Like Calvin before him, Nevin wants the connection with Christ to be as real as possible, grounded in the way divine power operates in the world. The reality of this link is where the power of the Eucharist lies, providing the glue by which the formation of communities may take place. Nevin asserts,

⁶⁸ Nevin, p. 177. He continues in his next point, "The visible and the invisible are different, and yet, in this case, they may not be disjoined. They flow together in the constitution of one and the same sacrament. Neither of the two is the sacrament, abstracted from the other. The ordinance holds in the sacramental transaction; which includes the presence of both, the one materially, for the senses, the other spiritually, for faith. Christ's body is not in or under the bread, locally considered. Still, the power of his life in this form is actually exhibited at the same time in the mystery of the sacrament. The one is as truly and really present in the institution as the other. The elements are not simply significant of that which they represent, as serving to bring it to mind by the help of previous knowledge. They are the pledge of its actual presence and power. They are bound to it in mystical, sacramental union, more intimately, we may say, than they would be if they were made to include it in the way of actual local comprehension. There is far more, then, than the mere commemoration of Christ's death. Worthy receivers partake also of his body and blood, with all this benefits, through the power of the Holy Spirit, to their spiritual nourishment and growth in grace." (p. 178)

⁶⁵ Nevin, pp. 133-4

⁶⁶ Nevin, p. 152

⁶⁷ Nevin, p. 152

Any theory of the Eucharist will be found to accord closely with the view that is taken, at the same time, of the nature of the union generally between Christ and his people. Whatever the life of the believer may be as a whole in this relation, it must determine the form of this communion with the Savior in the sacrament of the supper, as the central representation of its significance and power.⁶⁹

To his contemporaries, Nevin sounds very Catholic here. In the sixteenth century, Calvin had sought to teach a real spiritual presence over against Roman Catholic corporal presence, which seemed to them much more "real." Here Nevin is trying to maintain Calvin's middle ground, but the very assertion of a "real" presence is more than many of his fellow Protestants would grant. While Calvin's teaching seemed to his contemporaries to diminish the expectation of the Eucharist as a powerful and objective means of delivering grace, Nevin's teaching seem to expand this expectation. While Calvin was particularly keen to avoid idolatry and the limitation of God, Nevin is more concerned to avoid the full removal of divine action from the sacrament. In both cases, those asserting what they saw as a "more real" presence of Christ in the Eucharist, believed that the "objectivity of the divine presence in the sacrament was . . . the very essence of the faith."⁷⁰

In addition to sounding Roman Catholic by insisting on the objective presence of Christ's body and blood in the sacrament, Nevin also sounds Roman Catholic in stressing the importance of the teaching tradition of the church. Although he confesses that scripture is the true test of doctrine, and devotes the final segment of the *Mystical Presence* to "Biblical Argument," the whole tenor of the work, is one of respect for history and Christian tradition. As Roman Catholic polemicists in the sixteenth century argued against Calvin that correct biblical interpretation was available only within the church, so Nevin argues against private judgment in favor of the long-standing "feeling" of the church about the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist. From the earliest centuries of the church, Nevin says, "the sacrament was felt . . . to involve not simply a memorial of Christ's sacrifice, but the very

power of the sacrifice itself, as made present in his glorified life."⁷¹

In addition to commitment to exegetical and teaching tradition, respect for institutional authority had also characterized sixteenth-century Catholics. As Elwood has shown, they fearfully anticipated that if "sacramental efficacy does not proceed from the elements that are the sole possession of the church but is instead bound up with faith, a possession of the individual," then the need for the institution of the church or, for that matter, any hierarchical institution would be greatly diminished. Individuals would wield power in the temporal sphere and the integrity of the community would be up for grabs.⁷²

By the time we get to the nineteenth century, these fears no longer seem so frightening. Instead they seem to many Americans to be the normal, and indeed, good way to organize society. Democratization is a virtue, not a threat.

How then does community form properly via the Eucharist? Not, according to Nevin, on the basis of subjective appropriation of the message of the bread and wine. This must happen in the realm of spiritual reality. Nevin's favorite metaphors for the church, the community nourished on the Eucharist, stress the sharing of a single life through all its parts—the vine and the branches, the body. Nevin acknowledges that "A common political corporation may indeed be represented by the same comparison, so far as the idea of mutual subserviency on the part of its members is concerned . . ."⁷³ But, like Calvin and in distinction from the sixteenth (and nineteenth)-century Catholic ideal, a political community can never be as deeply unified as the body of Christ. Nevin says,

[The] two cases are of a wholly different character: since the ground of unity in the church is always represented by Paul to be of a far deeper nature than is to be found anywhere else; nothing less, in fact, than the life of Christ himself, mystically flowing through its entire constitution.⁷⁴

For Nevin, only the right understanding of the sacrament can account for

⁶⁹ Nevin, p. 31

⁷⁰ Elwood, p. 110

⁷¹ Nevin, p. 128

⁷² Elwood, p. 111

⁷³ Nevin, p. 236

⁷⁴ Nevin, p. 237

the unity of the church. "It is no mechanical conjunction that makes them one," he writes.

The case excludes the supposition of everything like a magical or merely outward transfer of life from Christ to his people, such as is implied in the dogma of transubstantiation. But neither is the conjunction simply spiritualistic; for this would be to resolve all at last into a merely moral character. In distinction from both these conceptions, we say of it that it is organic, in the fullest sense of this term. The new human life in Christ reaches over, as a central uncompounded force, *by the Spirit*, into the persons of Christ's people; and there reveals itself, with constantly reproductive energy, under the same form, true always to its own nature, until at length the whole man—spirit, soul, and body—is transformed fully into its image.⁷⁵

As with Calvin, the liturgy is a vital means of Eucharistic communal formation. Seeking to avoid a claim that the sacrament works *ex opere operato*, Nevin is adamant that only those actively exercising their faith receive the sacrament. Those who are not in a spiritual state to discern the body receive only bare signs and these to their judgment.⁷⁶ This conviction will enter the German Reformed liturgy via the service of preparation. The pastor is to address the communicants,

We have to do here, not with outward signs only, but with the heavenly realities themselves which these signs represent . . . Being of such high and awful character, it is plain that the Lord's Supper can be rightly and safely approached only by those who are of a truly devout and religious mind . . . If any of you who are here present, then, know yourselves to be the willing servants of sin, being without repentance and faith . . . we solemnly warn and admonish you, that ye presume not, so long as this is your character, to come to the table of the Lord . . . On the other hand, we cordially invite to this table all who are truly grieved and penitent for their sins, who look to the Lord Jesus Christ for righteousness and salvation, who abide in the fellowship of his church, and who earnestly desire to possess his Spirit and to

⁷⁵ Nevin, p. 238

⁷⁶ Nevin, p. 182

walk in his steps . . .⁷⁷

The communion service itself ends with thanksgiving that through the spiritual food received, we are assured "that we are very members incorporate in the mystical body of [Christ]."⁷⁸

Although not explicit in *The Mystical Presence*, Nevin anticipated that the growth of the mystical body of Christ would slowly, organically bring wider culture under its guidance, shaping it until Christ was all and in all. Later, after a period of theological "dizziness," Nevin confirmed his place in the German Reformed church, relying on the divinely guided processes of historical development to bring the church to fullness and society to the kingdom of God.

In brief conclusion, we have seen a Catholic and two versions of the Reformed understanding of the presence of Christ in the sacrament of the Eucharist. In each case, the assertions made concerning the connection between the Eucharistic signs and the Christ signified were understood to provide the grounding unity for the communities that participate in the sacrament. How power works in the Supper is claimed to have ramifications for how power is conceived in broader society and how the church itself may gradually transform political life. Thus, not surprisingly, in our own twenty-first-century search for community, we are directed by these predecessors in the faith to attend to and to carefully articulate how it is that Christ himself is communicated in the Eucharist.

In addition, the authors to whom we have been listening give us wise counsel for approaching these matters in our own day. Elwood's analysis of the impact of Eucharistic understandings on the formation of society is grounded in an analysis of the "public career" of these ideas. He works hard to determine not just what Calvin and other writers said, but also what ordinary people made of them. While he does not make any claims about his own work of historical theology for the doing of contemporary theology, he does call interpreters to pay attention to the "public

⁷⁷ "An Evangelical Catholic Liturgy: Preparation for the Holy Communion," in James Hastings Nichols, ed., *The Mercersburg Theology* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2004; copyright 1966, Oxford University Press), pp. 267-268

⁷⁸ Nichols, p. 280

meanings and popular modes of thought and practice" that shape the life of symbols and form their theological backdrop. As he says,

Critically rethinking and restating the contemporary meaning of faith will require attending carefully to the *present* public life of theological ideas and religious symbols, the public discourses to which they give rise, and the particular social and political contexts in which they have their life.⁷⁹

Thus if the Eucharist is to be pertinent in our public cultivations of community, in addition to articulating sign and signified, we must ask questions outside the theological box. What kind of public discussion is the Eucharist generating? What are the values it conveys? What responses does it elicit? How does it connect with and/or challenge how power is understood in our society? How are agency and instrumentality conceived? How do eating and community correlate? Where are the points of contact that can engage the Eucharist in the key questions surrounding the formation and transformation of church, society and culture?

We saw Nevin attending to the contemporary understandings that the symbol of the Eucharist had in his day as preparation for presenting his own teaching. He was attentive to presenting his convictions in ways that would make sense to his readers. When Nevin used contemporary understandings of personality to improve upon Calvin, he saw this as a real scientific upgrade, "placing it under a form with which even the abstract understanding itself can have no good right to find fault."⁸⁰ Although this sounds very dated to our ears, we do well to attend to the wisdom of Nevin's claim to seek contemporary functional equivalents of older theological insights. As Nevin claimed,

We hold fast to the substance, while, for the very sake of doing so, we endeavor to place it in a better form . . . We cling to the old; in its life, however, rather than by slavish adhesion to its letter.⁸¹

Thus, if the church is to present a spiritual real presence as a fundamental part of our doctrine and life together, it needs to do this in a way that

⁷⁹ Elwood, p. 10

⁸⁰ Nevin, p. 158

⁸¹ Nevin, p. 158

makes contemporary sense, even while acknowledging an irreducible level of mystery. We don't expect to cast this "scientifically," but can we cast it "post-modernly"? In the last several decades, philosophers, theologians and pundits have had a fascination with language, with signification, with the worlds that words create. This is a natural point of connection with those shaping public discourse, and one that connects, as we have seen, with the heart of the matter.

For Calvin and for Nevin, the Eucharist was an organizing principle for life. When Nevin talked about the life of Christ being given in Eucharist, he envisioned it as the spiritual genetic template that enables the faithful to grow into Christ. For Calvin, the Eucharist created the mystical body of Christ and organized it with vigor. In our postmodern era, broad "organizing principles" are suspect. But, I'm inclined to find hope in the public valuing and longing for community. Nevin repeatedly spoke about the "power of a common life," meaning the life of Christ growing to fruition in Christians. I suspect that "common life" has much of the symbolic force that contemporary public theology needs. And, if Calvin and Nevin were right in their understanding, this will turn directly to the relationship between sign and signified, to the mystical presence of Christ.

THE EUCHARISTIC LIFE: FROM THE TABLE TO THE SIDEWALK

TIMOTHY J. MULDER

I am so glad to be with you for this conference. When Dr. Kansfield invited me to reflect on how the Eucharist moves from its liturgical celebration into our daily lives, I decided to call our time together, "The Eucharistic Life—from the Table to the Sidewalk."

My prejudice is that we do not always think our way to new behavior, so much as we often behave our way into new understandings and appreciations. Nowhere is this more true than as it pertains to worship. How we worship can and I believe does, shape how we live.

Over the last forty years there have been significant shifts in both the understanding and practice of the Eucharist, especially in American Protestantism. And although there is no doubt that since Vatican II, there has been liturgical convergence that is not what I am talking about here. This is not about the Church worshipping in more similar ways, but rather in a changing sense of the sacraments and why and how we celebrate them. My observation is that it is that evolution of how and why we celebrate the sacraments that is leading us in new ways from the Table to the sidewalk, which is to say that how we worship is changing how we live every day.

These reflections come out of the soil of the parish and the lives of its people. I come at this from the perspective of a pastor who has served parishes in two denominations and hope that some of our experiences will help you to consider the life of the sacraments in your communities of faith, and how what we do on Sunday makes possible how we live on Monday.

I. BECOMING NORMAL AND NORMATIVE

When I was a child, the celebration of the Lord's Supper was a rare thing. It took place four times each year. We were told "Catholics" did it every Sunday; but how could anything done that often be important? For us, the Lord's Supper was like the family china that could be washed, dried

and put away by the adults after Thanksgiving dinner, but only with incredible care for fear of dropping, and certainly would never be used at the breakfast table. It was too precious for that.

One of the first things a visiting Protestant notices the second time she or he worships in a sacramentally centered church, is that they're having Communion again even though they just did this last week. A few months into it, one wonders why? Why all the fuss? Doesn't this get boring if you celebrate every week; doesn't it become meaningless rote? This is a typical reaction among those who move from infrequent to frequent celebration of the Eucharist. But if one sticks with it, something happens. The rite is not rote, but becomes what is real, and in fact, essential.

Infrequent Communion seems a bit like celebrating Christmas or birthdays as a child. There is anticipation and it is special. But what is special is two-fold: first, it is so rare that it is noticed as special, and second, it is the time of big gifts that don't come at other times.

The problem is that what is special is not the thing itself, but rather its infrequency. It is not Christmas as the birth of Jesus, or a birthday party focusing on the life of a child. It is that this celebration only happens once a year, so we'd better not miss it. And the fact that we give gifts, if we are honest, is why Christmas and birthdays have become more popular in our culture than Easter or Pentecost. After all, Easter and Pentecost are theologically more important than Christmas, and they, too, only happen once a year, but short of some chocolate or a colored egg, our society hasn't wrapped either of these holy days with the same ribbon or hype.

Is there anything wrong with special and rare occasions? Of course not, but the Eucharist is not the center of the life of faith because of its infrequency. It is central to the life of faith because it is the sustaining daily bread.

The movement from Table to sidewalk takes place in the shift of those things that are so precious as not to be handled frequently, to being so normative that they become how we live every day. Rather than receiving Christ only on "special" occasions, receiving Christ at the outset of each new week sets the tone for our attitude toward all that comes our way in the next seven days.

The joy of frequent Eucharist is that there are endless ways to experience the sacrament. Today, my need is forgiveness; next Sunday it may be resurrection or hope. Each week the Eucharistic prayer offers something that jumps to life on that particular day. The emphasis can change with each changing celebration.

If some of our ancestors in the faith worried that frequent Communion would make it less important consider the opposite peril, namely that infrequent Communion could make it too important. Remember those times in your life when the big occasion did not go as expected, wanted, planned or needed. Remember the anniversary dinner that was ruined by a cook at the restaurant who burned everything that night, or when your parents gave you the red bike when your heart was set on blue. When one's limited spiritual eggs are in an infrequent basket, breaking an egg can be catastrophic. But when Communion is celebrated every week, this week becomes more like the cycle of nature. Today it's raining, but it won't ruin everything, after all, this isn't the only day we can go to the ballgame. We can go next Sunday.

Frequent Communion becomes a natural part of life, not unlike waking up or going to sleep. It becomes a part of self-definition: I am a person who receives Christ all the time. And that is precisely how Jesus inaugurated it in that Upper Room—as a perfectly ordinary and regular occurrence, along with eating and washing one's feet.

The primary purpose of the 1979 revision of the *Book of Common Prayer* was to return the Church to that which differentiates Jewish liturgy from Christian liturgy, and that is the celebration on the Lord's Day of the resurrection in the Eucharist. There was a time I couldn't imagine worship without a sermon. Now I can't imagine a Sunday (or any other day?) without Communion. It is not only natural, but normative.

Worship concerns itself with the details of creation, with that which is both natural and normative in our daily living.

II. MOVING FROM THE HEAD TO THE WHOLE PERSON

For those of us who grew up in the Reformed Tradition, the Lord's Supper remained *more cognitive than anything else*. We didn't want to admit we thought of this activity as being merely symbolic, but words and ideas were our primary currency.

The sermon was the most important part of any service and its primary

purpose was instruction. It was the teaching and interpretation of scripture and its application to daily life. This had at least two drawbacks. The first was that worship was not primarily about what the people would offer God in response to God's goodness, but what the people would receive in order to be assisted in living. The second added to the human-focused dimension of worship, namely that with the sermon as the pinnacle of worship, the preacher and his or her ability in the pulpit was of paramount importance. People would choose a church or come to church to "hear a good sermon." Even church architecture reflected this didactic dominance of purpose for worship as the churches of the Reformation began to take the shape of lecture halls focused on a speaker's podium rather than the community gathered around the font or table. It was a cerebral experience.

Looking back to my move from the Reformed to the Anglican tradition, I talked about joining Word and Sacrament as being the way Calvin always said he wanted it. As he said, "the right administering of the Sacrament cannot stand apart from the Word."¹ He never could convince any single church to celebrate every Sunday, so he did the moving, going to a different church every Sunday in order to have weekly Communion. So as I moved toward the Episcopal Church, I knew the frequency was going to increase, and looked forward to that, although a part of my upbringing still asked, "What if it becomes a dull routine, an empty ritual?"

Admittedly, there are times I just go through the motions. I don't always think about what we are doing or what is being said. I don't take the time or energy to prepare as I could. But something has happened. Worship has moved beyond the head.

Worship today, in all its Christian branches is a more sensual affair. Sight, touch, taste, listening and even in some places smelling are all increasing in Protestant churches. In a word, we long to experience God: God's love, God's forgiveness, God's strength, all that God is and does. And as we do so, worship is being freed to go beyond words and instruction.

There are so many words in our culture today. Words can edify, but

¹ Calvin, John, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960, Book IV, Chapter 17, section 39, page 1416.

words can also manipulate, and as St. James knew, even do harm. So words are a mixed blessing. We cannot, nor would we want to, worship God without them, but it is good to go beyond them as well.

As Jeremy Taylor, the 17th century divine, said,

Dangerous it were for the feeble mind of humankind to wander far into the doing of the Almighty. Our safest eloquence concerning Him is our silence. Therefore our words should be far and few.

The mystery, which is beyond words, beyond knowing, is recognizing and experiencing the presence of Christ in the community gathered for holy celebration and transformation.

I have learned this most from watching little children waddling forward to Communion. What a blessing it is to have them there. Their very presence makes us a more honest community. The eyes of the members of the choir, through which the child passes to get to the communion rail, mist up and even the tough altos smile. The parent or adult friend helps the little child kneel and place one hand on top of another and reach out to receive. Once I missed a child, who quickly shouted, "Hey, I want Jesus!" The whole crowd of stiff Anglicans overheard and shouted out, "Amen!" What a moment. You can't teach this in class. It gets shared in life. It is incredible how quickly children come to love Communion. I shouldn't be surprised; to such as these belong the kingdom of heaven.

The Eucharist is the drama of the Gospel acted out. It is less about words or instruction and more about what we do in response to God's actions for the world. The Eucharist, by its very drama calls for the whole person, heart, mind, body and strength, to move from the Table to the sidewalk. In worship there is a time for everything: a time to listen and a time to act. The action of the whole people of God teaches us that there are times being a Christian means acting in the world as well, acting for the nurturing of communities, for the reconciliation of the estranged, for the healing of the nations, for giving hope to those without hope. This drama in worship calls us to take up our part in the world.

III. BECOMING COMMON

Eucharist has become common—but in a wonderful way that does not diminish the mystery one bit. It is natural and normative and we have already said how the action of the Eucharist moves us beyond words.

But the Eucharist has also been reclaimed as common in the sense of common worship: the assembled gathering takes us beyond ourselves and puts the best part of us in community. I am not whole without being a part of this Body, this community. The Eucharist understood as the feast of the community requires participation in a democratic way, not a spectator of what others are doing, nor even simply a recipient. This is not "Jesus and me," but rather, "God and us." In common worship God meets us at the table, font, book *and* in the people.

In the Eucharist the common is made holy, and the holy is common. Jesus took ordinary bread and wine at the dinner table and said, in effect, in this ordinary stuff you will see me, remember me, and taking this into yourself, you will be one with me. You, ordinary folk will be made holy. And in the same way that God takes human form to live among us, the holy becomes common. Is not then the goal of faith that God would so consecrate every ordinary thing in life so that it would be holy, and that we would see the holy in every ordinary thing? How can this be? How can this happen? That, too, is why we call this a mystery. How can God be revealed throughout creation? How can God help us recognize the holy in the rest of life? I think Jesus' special gift of bread and wine awakens our senses and our spirit to this mystery. This mystery of bread and wine and experiencing Christ in it, puts us on the alert for Christ throughout our lives and God's transforming presence and power in all things.

Eucharist recognizes the real presence of God in every sustaining and nourishing activity of life. Every weekday meal shared in faith becomes eucharistic, giving thanks for God's living presence and power. And in between those meals our other activities become touched by the holy: junior's baseball game or piano lesson, or the meeting at the office or chores around the house. Life itself is consecrated. Common life becomes a vehicle and celebration of grace offered and received.

There was a time when the celebration of the Eucharist was such an exalted religious activity that it was done on behalf of the people, out of their sight, with words they could not understand and activity with which they were not invited to participate. They were separated physically by screens and the backs of priests who would not even face them. All of this was to communicate how holy and distant this was, and in a sense to hide them from the holy mystery. But what it really communicated was that holy things are not the work of the people. Today's movement

toward making the Eucharist common means that it is the work of all, and that it is always our work. The mystery in Bread and Wine is the same mystery at work in the priesthood of all believers: "you are a royal priesthood . . . in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light."²

But how does the Eucharist proclaim the Gospel if all are not invited and included?

IV. BECOMING INCLUSIVE

Every Sunday at St. Luke's there is a point in the service where we all say, "We who are many are one body, because we all share One Bread, One Cup." What does it mean to live out Jesus' prayer in the Gospel according to John that we might all be one?

I remember a church I used to attend largely because of its incredible music program. But one day I overheard the priest say, "There will never be a woman behind the rail in this church." How recently many of our churches had to struggle with sexual gender and ordination. Most of us have accepted that in Christ there is neither male nor female, and the life of our communities has been enriched by female as well as male clergy. We discovered it is not biology, but baptism that calls us to ministry.

Baptism makes us one in Christ. That unity is echoed in every celebration of the Eucharist: "by him, with him and in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit." The Table, is that place and way of being by which God calls humanity to be inviting and inclusive, "that all may be one."

We know that the early church divided its worship between the service of the Word and the service of the Table, and that those new to the faith who had not yet been baptized would be required to leave following the service of the Word. We also know that it remains the practice in many churches today to invite only those who are either baptized or the baptized within their own communion. It was often called the meal of the family of God. But as an adult, I realize that some of my earliest memories of being a part of the church were of being excluded. As a child I was being starved at the family table.

It was always a long service. That's what I remember about those days

² 1 Peter 2:9

we had the Lord's Supper in South Holland, Illinois. Starched white cloths covered the table hiding something. They came off to reveal towers of silver trays, stacked like space ships, each holding concentric rings of Welch's. It was always a moment of anticipation when they were lifted off, as though something might jump out. But first came the bread: perfectly cut in squares, white and without crust. The elders passed them the way ushers usually took up the collection. I remember watching grown ups taking a single piece and then squeezing it between thumb and forefinger, until everyone had been served and the minister said something and they all put it in their mouths at the exact same moment. We sat and sat, bored, but realizing this was important and knowing this important thing did not include us. "When you're older, dear. When you understand what we're doing." And so we waited, waited until summer Christian camp led us to "give our lives to Jesus" and then we could have communion, or, when we moved to the East Coast it was simpler because it came at the end of confirmation class in the 8th grade and we all did it together.

But why was there such a fear that if people didn't know what they were doing, if they didn't understand and couldn't articulate this which we call a mystery, that it would be less instead of more beneficial to both the individuals and the entire Body?

Far be it from me to want to get into an argument with John Calvin, but in his consideration of 1 Corinthians 11, his conclusion that discerning the Body had to do with understanding what the Sacrament was all about seems both right and wrong. The Sacrament is about the Body, but throughout the writings of St. Paul, the Body of Christ means the community of faith, it is not about bread and wine of the Sacrament.

For me the beauty and the caution of that chapter in Corinthians is that we can in no way be imitating Christ if we ignore poverty or need among the members of the Body. Rather than being about cognition, Paul's intention was inclusion. The Christian community was to be the Body of Christ in and for the world. No wonder we call it mystical. It is not about going to a class, passing an examination, being approved. Rather, it is about being welcomed and included in Jesus' name; being nurtured and empowered for a life of reconciliation, love and service.

In the mid-1970's, I worked at Warwick Conference Center with mentally retarded teenagers who would never have passed our church's

requirements for a statement of belief. Were they to be excluded from the Table? Or would the Church recognize and welcome them as children of God?

In the 1980's we began the work of welcoming all the baptized at the Table. The goal was that Baptism would be the only requirement to be fed on the food of faith.

When our son, Tom, was born we fed him from moment of his birth. It would have been deadly to wait until he could appreciate our love or articulate at any level an understanding of what was happening to him biologically when he took food into his body. We fed him because he needed food to live. We fed him because he was part of our family and we love him.

In Communion love is shared. A child watches his or her parents or other adults celebrating the Lord's Supper and sees that this matters. A child feels inclusion as a far more powerful and wonderful experience than exclusion. Waiting until we understand and can handle the responsibility of things may be fine for sex or driving a car, but to be offered love before understanding is the very essence of God's activity toward humanity. Life, breath, communion.

It was the 1982 study by the World Council of Churches entitled, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* that first sparked the inseparable union between these three. Eucharist needs to be the nourishment of the baptized in order for them to engage in ministry in the world.

Which raises a problem for me. I am a priest. I celebrate the Sacrament and offer the elements to God's people as the very grace of God. And yet, we, the Church, continue to act as though these are our sacraments and that we have some right to determine who may or may not receive. "These are the gifts of God for the people of God" I proclaim every week, and yet I am troubled by the second half of that proclamation.

I see my priesthood as that of a butler or a waiter, a server at the banquet. I simply extend a gift on behalf of my master. Who am I or who are we as the Church, to presume that the person who comes to the table might not be served? Who am I to say "No" to anyone? One might say, well, not everyone comes to dinner; only those who accept Jesus as their Lord and are baptized should be served. Well, the point of one of my favorite parables (Matthew 22 and Luke 14) is when the master instructs the

servants to go out and invite everyone in; no one who comes is to be denied.

One of my favorite experiences when I had the pleasure of teaching worship at New Brunswick Seminary came from the denominational diversity of the student body here. Pentecostals used to look with suspicion on my collar. The rare Roman Catholic, Anglican or Lutheran in our midst were usually on the defensive. Then would come the time when I would address the class and innocently say, "But we all have an altar call every Sunday." The Baptists knew they did, but the Anglicans looked at me with eyes that said, "I don't know what you're talking about." Then I would ask, "What is the difference between saying, 'The doors of the church are open. Anyone who wishes to turn your life over to Jesus and be saved, come and receive him. Come and pray with one of the deacons here at the front of the church as we sing, 'Just as I am.''" What is the difference between that and saying, "The bread which we break is the Communion of the Body of Christ. Come, for all things are now ready." Or, "These are the gifts of God for the people of God. Take them and remember that Christ died for you and feed on him in your hearts by faith with thanksgiving." Both are an invitation to receive Christ.

Which leads to the problem. Baptism is required to be a part of the people of God: the gifts of God for the people of God, remember? And we have always insisted that the sacraments need to be received in faith to have integrity, but should not the grace of God always be invitational on our part? Is it not our task to go out and bring anyone and everyone to the banquet and say, "There's going to be a feast tonight and you don't want to miss it. You never want to miss this master's banquets." And even for that lost tourist who stumbles in and for whatever reason decides to put out her hands or heart or curious spirit, why would we not say, "Here, here is the feast that gives meaning and purpose and joy to life. Take and eat and let him live in you and through you."

Until the Church offers the Eucharist to anyone, for any reason, I think we are letting down the parable of the banquet and the One whose party this life really is. Grace overflowing and uncontainable, and slightly messy as it spills not only on the table cloth, but on the whole world. That's moving the Eucharist from the Table to the sidewalk.

We have a ways to go in this area of inclusion. To what does

faithfulness call us regarding the different religions of the world? And now so many of our churches are wrestling with matters not of sexual gender, but orientation.

This is especially relevant when branches of the Church use the Eucharist as a means of discipline, withholding the elements in judgment of one's beliefs and especially today, political positions. Given the opportunity to err on the side of grace or judgment, I would prefer grace without ceasing. The Church is the servant in the world, inviting on the host's behalf.

The Eucharist as a Table of inclusion of all people seems to me to be what the ministry of Jesus was ultimately about. In Christ there is no differentiation of people. All are loved by God. All are God's children. Christ died for all. Christ extends the invitation of abundant and eternal life to all. The invitation cannot be limited. And as an attitude toward living then, we learn to be more inclusive and less regulated in our dealings with one another. "I may not understand you. Our ways may be different. Our beliefs may be different. Yet, come; let us sit at the heavenly banquet table where there is room for all."

V. MOVING BEYOND WORRYING ABOUT WHAT HAPPENS TO THE BREAD

Which brings us to that age old debate over just what it is we are offering at this banquet. Is it mere symbol, or physical flesh and blood? Does Christ come down into bread and wine? I like Calvin's expression that in Communion Christ raises us up to be with him. That is Richard Hooker's belief as well. In his work, *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*³, and I am paraphrasing him, he says that he is not so concerned with what actually happens to the bread and wine as he is with what happens to us as a result. Because you celebrate the Eucharist, what happens to you? Because you take Christ into your life, what happens to you? Because the Church worships God through the joyous and frequent sharing of the Body and Blood of Christ in faith and in obedience to our Lord's command, how is the world brought more under the reign of God?

³ Hooker, Richard, Georges Edelen, ed., *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1977, chapters 55-67. See also: Sykes, Stephen and Booty, John, *The Study of Anglicanism*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1988, page 167

Although some people may still be very concerned with what happens to bread and wine, it seems that most Christians in the pews these days have little interest in fighting with each other over that question and are more concerned with what happens because of that bread and wine.

Is it possible that things that have mattered very much in the past, and been divisive in the past, can be put aside in favor of working for peace or understanding or even cooperation in the future? Could this be within families, among nations, even religions? Might asking ourselves what really matters in the Eucharist for us today become a model for asking what really matters in other areas of our living?

VI. THIS MYSTERY GETS DIRT UNDER YOUR FINGERNAILS—HOLY WORK

It's easy for guests at a party to be oblivious to the preparation and clean up, but without them, there would be no party. The disciples had to prepare a room, they had to go find a colt; they had to work a little. Communion doesn't just fall from the sky like manna from heaven. The dishes don't get washed and put away by angels. All this spiritual ritual and rite doesn't magically just happen, mysteriously, but not magically.

Work is involved, and discipline and planning, and it isn't always how you'd like to spend your time, and sometimes the Rector drives you nuts because she wants things done a different way. And you don't get paid nearly enough to wash those dainty white cloths with all the lipstick. So you just have to do it out of the goodness of your heart—over and over again. Gone is the glamour, here is the plain work that needs to get done. This work, however, is sanctified, not only by what is being done, but why. God blesses the work offered in love for the world as well as one's particular parish.

How different is that from so much of what we do? Some of us may do it in offices, others in classrooms or on ball fields or working on a road crew. But the Eucharist sanctifies our daily work as well.

At our parish, we have a Wednesday morning Eucharist followed by a Bible study. Last week I told the group that I would be with you this week and what our topic was. I asked them what difference their having been a part of this mid-week Eucharist, some of them for as long as thirty years, had made in their daily living. One person replied,

When I receive, it is a purity of soul, a cleansing of my soul, and it just

naturally makes me treat people better after I leave here. I mean, how could you possibly be cruel or inconsiderate to someone after you've just taken Christ into you?

Another person said, "It's about the ability to recognize God. If you see God in church, you work at seeing God outside as well. The Eucharist is like practice at seeing God everywhere." And still another said, "My prayer life all week is more extensive and inclusive because the Eucharist takes me beyond my own concerns."

VII. A COMMUNITY OF PRAYER

The phone rang in our home late last night. The person's car had broken down; could I fill in and celebrate the Eucharist the next morning at the convent in Mendham? Going to that community where prayer and work become so intertwined, helped me appreciate how much of the Eucharist is about prayer.

It is this shared prayer with Christ at the center that moves us beyond ourselves and shapes us as a community for the world. All of prayer gets put in the context of God's love and life for the world, of grace offered and forgiveness granted and most of, hope transcending time and other limits.

The regularity of common Eucharistic praying also shapes personal prayer during the week. This model of thanksgiving, memory, the communion of saints, of petition and consecration, of sharing and hope, these regular elements shape thought and action of children and adults alike. Prayer is both the gift and the fruit of the Eucharist.

VIII. FORGIVENESS TO ETHICS

There has been a shift in our prayers at the Eucharist. It was not so long ago that the "Prayer of Humble Access" begged God's mercy because, "we are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs from under Thy table."⁴ Today, we still acknowledge our sinful nature and need for forgiveness, but the celebration of the Eucharist is the feast of the resurrection. It celebrates that those who share in it are already forgiven. And they are forgiven for a purpose: to reconcile the world to God and to one another.

⁴ *Book of Common Prayer*, page 337.

In that sense the requirement of going to confession before receiving, or reading the Exhortation to Self-examination on the Sunday prior to the Sunday of the Lord's Supper had things in right order. It was, "Go first and be reconciled and then come." This is a feast of the forgiven. This is the feast of those who live in the reality of the resurrection and the power of Pentecost.

The proper preface anchors us in a specific time and place. It reminds us that we are in Easter now, or Pentecost now, or Advent, or whatever. And because we are anchored in this specific time we are also in a specific place. Today we are in New Brunswick. Our location and the hour of day may be set in the scope of eternity, but this is materialism in the most holy of senses. It is this very matter, which we take into ourselves and become ourselves, which we have the nerve to say will be forever raised with Christ and will ascend with him for ever, and be glorified for ever. It is Christ for the world we sing, the world to Christ we bring.

This is not simply a feast for eating and enjoying in the moment, but because of the energy it will give us to propel us into the rest of life, for the sake of the salvation of all creation.

Eucharist is not an end in itself. Eucharist serves the purpose of worship and service. It is not simply: "The Mass is ended. Go in peace." But, "Almighty and ever living God, we thank you for feeding us with the spiritual food of the most precious Body and Blood of your Son our Savior Jesus Christ; and for assuring us in these holy mysteries that we are living members of the Body of your Son, and heirs of your eternal kingdom. And now, Father send us out to do the work you have given us to do, to love and serve you as faithful witnesses of Christ our Lord."⁵ It is not simply being fed to go in peace, but to go in peace to do the work of witnesses. Eucharist becomes life. It is the service of God in the world.

The movement of emphasis in the celebration of the Eucharist from forgiveness to ethics moves the dynamic from inward to outward. This is not an act of personal piety, but of cosmic hope, beginning in the neighborhood where we share the Bread and Cup.

⁵ *Book of Common Prayer*, page 366.

IX. GUILT TO HOPE

How can we tell the stories of our ancestors in the faith, and how can we call upon the Holy Spirit to make these gifts of our labors into holy food and to make us into holy gifts for the world without accepting that this meal makes us responsible for the world? If we are joined with the communion of saints in these holy meals, then ours is the shared work of ministry, and if empowered by the Holy Spirit, it is not for that moment alone, but for every moment everywhere, even and especially for the future.

It is this eschatological hope we proclaim in this meal and around this table that gives hope to our days, that what we do with our lives matters.

Perhaps the most challenging aspect of this sacrament, especially for westerners, is to accept that only in being broken with the world can we ever be made whole. Solidarity with the world and especially with the least powerful means that we, too are broken, not just the bread; we, too are poured out, not just the wine; we, too, are offered, for the hope of the world.

I am especially grateful and moved when every Sunday a lay person comes to the altar just before the closing prayer, receives a small communion kit and we say, "So-and-so, on behalf of this parish family take this Bread and Wine to so-and-so, so that she might share with us in the Communion of Christ." In this way our sick and shut-ins share in Communion. And more often than not, the Communion that is shared in those visits is expanded to talk about the local tax referendum, the new neighbors down the street and all the ordinary concerns of life. Last month our church was filled for the memorial service for a woman who came to us only two years earlier. Sadly, she contracted cancer and became very ill with it after only about a year. Scores of our members brought her Communion and food and conversation. As the Brian Wren's hymn sings, "As Christ breaks bread and bids us share, each proud division ends; the love that made us, makes us one, and strangers now are friends."⁶

Saint Irenaeus is credited with having said, "See who you are. Be what you see. This is the Body of Christ, broken for you." In receiving the Body of Christ, we become the Body of Christ. In sharing the Body in

⁶ Wren, Brian, *"I Come with Joy to Meet My Lord"*, 1988.

the liturgy, we share it with the world.

But is that really any different from Dr. Chris McConnachie doing surgery in his hospital in South Africa or his wife, Jen, who has set up her AIDS clinic there? Or what about Bill Harris as he serves on our borough council, or Jane Martin as she teaches chemistry, or Brandon Clark directing marketing for a New Jersey based pharmaceutical? The Body of Christ spreads out during the week. See who you are in these elements of bread and wine. Be what you see as you go to work on Monday morning. You are the Body of Christ for the world.

This is rigorous stuff. In Eucharistic Prayer C of the *Book of Common Prayer*, we pray that we would come in faith to Communion, "not for solace only, but for strength, not for forgiveness only, but for renewal."⁷ In this harsh world, we all need the comfort of God and all the solace we can get from worship, but Communion strengthens us to live energetically.

There was a time when people might ask why we Christians would call what we do a "celebration" of the Eucharist, and they were right to ask. When the primary emphasis was on guilt and forgiveness, no wonder the mood was one of somber contrition. But as the emphasis has shifted to ethics and hope, as evidenced by the shift of the familiar fraction anthem, "Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world," being now offered as, "Happy are those who are called to the Supper of the Lamb." This is not a move toward "happy/clappy" worship. Rather this is because of the emphasis shifting to ethics and hope that people find in the celebration of the Eucharist a renewed purpose and meaning in their daily lives. As my elderly parishioner said, "How can I receive Christ and not go out to share his love?" Or as Don Postema wrote in his book *Space for God*,⁸ there is a spiral of gratitude in response to grace that just keeps moving life forward in a joyful way.

CONCLUSION

I have great hope for the Church and for this creation. In our lifetime we have received the great gifts of the sacraments, and through the work of

⁷ *The Book of Common Prayer*, New York: The Church Hymnal Corporation, 1979, page 372.

⁸ Postema, Don, *Space for God*, Grand Rapids: CRC Publications, 2nd edition, 1997.

the Spirit, they are functioning in new ways. This evolution in at least the nine ways we have just considered, is probably only a start to what you may be seeing in your own communities of faith, or what you pray is possible for the future of this planet and the reign of God.

Each of these shifts moves us away from a separation of the sacred from the secular, and connects us more closely with the mysterious grace and love of God's presence and purpose in this world. Rather than separation of the sacraments from life, the sacraments propel us into common life. From the Table to the sidewalk Christ is present; Christ is alive.

A Sermon

Norman Kansfield

Now the first thing that you need to know is that I am in theology because I flunked math. It had been my dream to be an architect, but when algorithms, sines, and cosines all were well beyond my managing, it was suggested that my future in architecture might be either limited or dangerous. But that is just as well. The so-called story problems in math exams were becoming, well, *very problematic*. The situations never made any sense to me. For example: "If Train A leaves station X headed south on the single rail line between X and Y traveling at a speed of 62 mph; and ten minutes later Train B leaves Station Y headed north on that same line traveling at a speed of 55 mph, and the distance between the two stations is 471 miles, when and where will Train B stop for water?"

I had already begun to determine just exactly when and where those trains were going to collide. I could hear the catastrophic scream of breaks freezing iron wheels on iron tracks. I could feel the concussion of the collision. I could sense the chaos of the post-impact scene. So what was this business of stopping for water?

You can see that theology was a wonderful escape. It was fun to wrestle with the two natures of Christ; or with the meaning of the Trinity; or even, if necessary, the number of angels dancing anywhere. But often, when I enter the gospel, there is our Lord asking a question that feels for all the world like I was back in Math class. In the case of today's Gospel lesson, Jesus says:

Now a certain creditor had two debtors; one owed five hundred *denarii*, and the other owed fifty. When they could not pay, he cancelled the debts of both of them. Now which of them loved him more? (Luke 7:41-42)

Wait a minute, Jesus! What do you mean, "Who will love him more?" How can anyone possibly know that? We don't have all of the necessary data! Isn't that like the question of where Train B will stop for water?

Or why a fish needs a bicycle? But, for Jesus, the question works!

Simon, the Pharisee, gets into the situation enough to be able to answer: "I suppose the one for whom he had cancelled the greater debt." And from that small crack in his own self-righteousness, Simon begins to understand the real meaning of this strange man from Galilee whom he had invited to dinner. Indeed, the question that Jesus asks begins to make clear the answers for all of the questions circling around that table.

Simon's unspoken question was: "Can this teacher really be a prophet?"

Simon saw Jesus' acceptance of the lavish attention from a woman whose reputation was, shall we say, *well known* in that community. From that acceptance, Simon drew the conclusion that this Jesus could not be a prophet because Jesus did not correctly *read* the character of her character. If Jesus were a prophet, he surely would have sensed the woman was impure, pushed the woman away, and thereby preserved the sanctity of the table at which they dined.

In response to Simon's unvoiced question, "Can this man really be a prophet?" Jesus offered his little riddle. The riddle makes clear that Jesus is fully aware of the question on Simon's mind. And Jesus' little riddle makes it clear even to Simon that the real question that needs asking in Simon's life is not about the woman. The real question is: "Does Simon understand that he, Simon, is forgiven?" Does Simon fully understand that Jesus loves him; loves him so very much that, even though Jesus can know every thought in Simon's mind, Jesus is still fully willing to be at table with Simon? So for Simon, the learning from this interchange is that, because Jesus loves him, he need not fear the intimacy of Jesus' love, or of anyone else's love. And in that love, Simon needs no longer to fear being changed—having his perceptions of others altered; having his theological vision enlarged in the recognition that Simon, also, is one whose sins are forgiven.

I have to confess that the woman's question is not fully present in the text. But I will bet this question was bouncing around in her head as she washed and anointed Jesus' feet: "Am I so truly forgiven that I can be, therefore, truly welcome, if not at this table, at Jesus' table?" The fact that she loved much, made it clear to Jesus that she already knew herself to have been forgiven. She was responding to God's grace in Jesus, not seeking to purchase it. Jesus' little riddle would otherwise not work at all. Many persons, whose great sins have been forgiven, find that the

church—all those professionally religious people represented by Simon, the Pharisee—is constantly questioning the full effectiveness of that forgiveness. As a result, those who are forgiven don't fully trust forgiveness themselves. Jesus' answer to the unspoken question of the woman was spoken in such a way that she heard, with the religious leadership as witnesses, "You *are* forgiven!" She was publicly reassured that *she* was loved by Jesus. She therefore need never fear again being trapped or embarrassed by her past, or rejected by anyone for what had been. And for Simon, the learning was this: that, in God's forgiveness, this woman had suddenly come to be his sister.

Finally, we come to the only question which really was asked aloud. "Who is this who even forgives sins?" It is God, of course, who forgives sins. But it is *in* Jesus that the offer of forgiveness of all our sins and our sinning comes to us. As the One Who Forgives Sins is really present with us, the tables of our ordinary lives are transformed into his table. And to his table Jesus may invite whomever he desires. When we are at table with the One Who Forgives Sins, we know: We are forgiven! We are invited! We are loved! We belong! We are enlisted to invite others! We do not have to be jealous of any others who may come to Jesus for forgiveness.

In the first hymnal of the Reformed Church in America, published in New York in 1789 (when the denomination was still known as the Reformed Dutch Church in North America) there was a hymn that I am sure the group around Simon's table would have sung had it been available to them. Its author is unknown to me, but in answer to Jesus' question she or he wrote:

Ye wretched, hungry, starving poor,
behold a royal feast!
where mercy spreads her bounteous store
for every humble guest.

See, Jesus stands with open arms;
He calls, he bids you come:
guilt holds you back, and fear alarms:
but see! there yet is room.
O come, and with his children taste
the blessings of his love;
while hope attends the sweet repast

of nobler joys above.
There, with united heart and voice,
before the eternal throne,
ten thousand thousand souls rejoice
in ecstasies unknown.
And yet ten thousand thousand more
are welcome still to come.
Ye longing souls, the grace adore;
Approach, there yet is room.

HEALING SILENCE: A Sermon

Martha Kriebel

Texts: 1 Kings 19: 12 ; Galatians 3: 28-29 ; Luke 8: 39

When Dr. Kansfield and I began to plan the sermons, we decided to use the lectionary for the upcoming Sundays. His sermon would follow the readings for June 13, mine for June 20th. After reading the Old Testament lesson with its description of noise, followed by the "sound of sheer silence," I thought of my husband's quote, "As nature abhors a vacuum, Martha abhors a silence." And here I am, *preaching* on "Healing Silence!"

Several friends reported their experience at a local restaurant. Close by, at the next table sat two adults and five children, all of preschool age. The children were the sound effects and actions of the Old Testament scene on Mt. Horeb! The place settings soon looked like they had been caught up in a strong wind and scattered across the tabletop. The chairs rocked and the children thumped from seat to seat creating tremors of a mild earthquake. And the floor looked like the rubble after a fire!

When they left, which, fortunately, was as our friends were being served, everyone seated in the dining room, and the waitress, refrained from talking to take in the wonderful calm of stillness.

In the Hebrew of the Old Testament story, it's "a sound of fine silence" which Karyn Kedar, a rabbi and counselor and speaker at Christian and Jewish retreats, calls "God Whispers." Those moments in our life when God ministers to us in the healing calm of silence . . . with the Scripture we just received being three sample surprises.

Elijah's surprise! With his energy spent and his faith in God shattered, he expected to be refreshed physically and renewed spiritually at the same place and in the same way God had called and commissioned Moses—on Mt. Horeb, that mountaintop chapel where Moses witnessed a worship drama that was a display of God's creative power staged in wind, earthquake, and fire.

But, for Elijah . . . *the Lord was not in the wind; not in the earthquake;*

not in the fire: The Lord was in a sound of sheer silence. Here the English of the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible that keeps us close to the Hebrew of the text and the surprise of Elijah.

2. He'd never encountered God through stillness.

It was his introduction to the healing power of silence—which the New England poet, John Greenleaf Whittier, would carry over into his lines of reaction to the drug-induced incantations of Hindu priests, and the frenzied Christian revivals, giving Christian congregations a prayer, now set to a hymn tune that has us singing:

*Breathe through the heats of our desire
Thy coolness and Thy balm;
Let sense be dumb, let flesh retire;
Speak through the earthquake, wind, and fire,
O still small voice of calm!*

The sound of sheer silence. Healing Silence!

It is then that Elijah's weary body, bruised emotions, and tattered soul were healed. It was then that Elijah was able to hear what God had to say to him. God getting his attention through the healing sound of silence!

In his book, *Worship in the Shape of Scripture*, Dr. F. Russell Mitman, reminds congregations that are tempted to stage worship as electronically induced hype and entertaining emotional highs, that "people are very hungry for an experience of the splendor of God that's very different from entertainment."

People are hungry for Elijah's surprise. To hear the "God Whisper" beyond any humanly staged hype or high of worship: An Elijah-like moment of sheer silence. Healing Silence!

A surprise for the early Christians! As they witnessed the "wind" that was sweeping, the "earthquake" that was shaking, the "fire" that was raging in their congregations, like a storm, splitting and breaking them apart, they experienced a hope-filled and healing silence. A "God Whisper," carried in the water of their Baptism that brought them back to their calling to be God's new creation where:

*There is no longer Jew or Greek,
there is no longer slave or free,
there is no longer male and female;*

*for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.
And if you belong to Christ,
then you are Abraham's offspring,
heirs according to the promise.*

3.

At times that may seem to be an impossible hope for the church, as congregations split over racism and gender and the wars waged over worship. How can there be any hope for all to be one in Christ!

That's what Ted Palmer, a Canadian officer in the Salvation Army, thought—until he played a game where barefooted people line up behind a sheet so only their toes are visible. Then everyone else has to try to put a name to a toe. Ted Palmer said it can become embarrassing when even married couples fail to recognize their partner's toe! To which I can attest!

In our first parish the Ladies' Aid Society's annual dinner ended with the same game. To my embarrassment the toe I picked as my husband's belonged to a man fifty years his senior! We didn't play that game after that night!

The game took a different turn for Ted Palmer. As he tried to put a name to a toe, he thought how we tend to identify Christians from bits of identifiable evidence. He confessed,

*It happens when I see a Christian charismatic big toe
and identify him or her as an emotionally intoxicated air-head.
Or I spot a social-action oriented digit and conclude this
must belong to a hyperactive active adult who can't sit
still long enough to pray.
I view a liturgically-oriented Christian as a spiritual pickle,
embalmed in the lifeless brine of tradition.
Or I write off an evangelical as one of those "born again nuts."*

But then he realized that each toe is attached to a body—baptized into the faith and family of Jesus Christ!

All toes *belong to Christ!* The "God Whisper" carried in the seal of Baptism. That early church-like moment of sheer silence: Healing Silence!

A surprise for Legion . . . The "God Whisper" of Jesus' ministry healed

him of the mental illness that had isolated him in a cemetery-institution, and brought an eerie calm to the tombs that had echoed with the noise of his outbursts. In that sheer silence Legion heard the clear call to follow Jesus, but was told,

4.

"Return to your home and declare how much the Lord has done for you." So he went away, proclaiming throughout the city how much Jesus had done for him.

Fred Craddock, a preacher's preacher, tells about a little girl whose parents dropped her off for Church School, but never came to church. They went home to rest up from their famous Saturday night parties to which they invited all the people who would give them social status and help them move up the social ladder.

But one Sunday morning, the pastor looked across the congregation and saw the little girl with her parents who Fred Craddock called Mr. and Mrs. Mom and Dad. It was a service that ended with the invitation to dedicate one's life to Christ, and Mr. and Mrs. Mom and Dad did!

The pastor couldn't help but ask, "What prompted this?" They said, "Well, do you know about our parties?" He said, "Yeah, I've heard about your parties." "Well, we had one last night. It got noisy. There was too much drinking. We woke our daughter. She came down stairs, saw we were eating and said, 'Oh, can I say the blessing? God is great, God is good, let us thank him for our food. Goodnight, everybody!'"

Then she went back to bed. "With that our guests began to say, 'We've got to be going. We've stayed too long.' And in minutes our house was empty!"

As they picked up crumpled napkins, spilled peanuts, half sandwiches, and carried trays of empty glasses back to the kitchen, they looked at each other and Mr. Dad expressed what Mrs. Mom was thinking, "Where do we think we're going?" Then, the healing silence, carried through a child who took her faith home to her family! The "God Whisper!"

A personal confession, follows theirs, not because of a late Saturday night party, but a Jubilee celebration at our local Roman Catholic Church. At that service I turned my Legion-like rage inward as I was isolated from the congregation processing toward the altar to receive the Body of Christ, and I was not welcome!

A few months later I was back for the Mass of Christian Burial for the parish's retired priest. This time I was seized with a convicting thought, "Martha, you are the one who is desecrating the Body of Christ with your anger!"

5.

As Christ called the evil spirits out of Legion, that thought brought me to my knees in meditation of the Christ I was receiving in that silence. The "God Whisper!" Healing Silence!

Did we hear it last night in and through the bread and cup? Did we hear it now? Those moments when God ministers in the healing calm of silence . . . with today's Scripture being three sample surprises. The "God Whisper" of Healing Silence. AMEN!

THE "CORE" OF FAITH

Gabriel Fackre

Confessing and Commending the Faith: Historical Witness and Apologetic Method by Alan P. F. Sell, Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2002.

Alan Sell has written a book that should be in the hands of all the readers of this journal. Its importance for us has to do not only with its illuminating references to the Mercersburg theology, but also with its sweeping account of the intellectual history of Christian thought as it pertains to the work's two questions: what is the core of Christian faith and how can we best commend it to doubters both outside and inside the church?

The author modestly identifies this final volume in a trilogy as a "prolegomenon to Christian apologetics." It is more than that being the equivalent of a seminary survey course on theology, past and present, complete with thousands of endnotes and numerous quotations (some homiletical treasures) from the early Fathers and medieval thinkers—Justin, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Origen, Augustine, Anselm, Aquinas, Ockham—through Calvin, Luther and the Reformers, to an array of British theologians—pastors and teachers (too little known or recognized in conventional intellectual histories) up through contemporary figures from Barth, Brunner, Bultmann, Tillich to the postliberals, the process theologians, the "Reformed epistemologists," and the proponents of "radical orthodoxy." (Missing, oddly, from this encyclopedic survey is America's most influential apologist, Reinhold Niebuhr). High profile in this list is P.T. Forsyth accompanied by many of his purple patches, though, theologically, Richard Baxter fares a little better for his "rounded" approach, reflecting Sell's own self-identified "reasoned eclecticism." And at the end of day, Calvin is there with a clinching argument.

The book is divided into 3 parts, the first dealing with the question of a core Christian faith, the second with a scrutiny of formidable, intellectual currents with which confessors of the core must deal in commending the

faith and finally a section exploring the inter-relations of reason and revelation and the complex interplay of faith, knowledge and experience, followed by some overall conclusions.

It's interesting to track the different ways the author describes the "core" in Part I and beyond, so elusive in theology ancient and current. Sell takes up the creeds initially, but recognizes their contextuality and corrigibility, ever in a quest for what is trans-contextual and non-negotiable. The question is: what in them, and in wider assumptions in the historic faith and practice of the historic church, establishes confessional identity in continuity. Here are some descriptions:

God's free, gracious saving act in Christ" (9): "in Christ's death and resurrection God has done for us that which we could never do for ourselves. A broken relationship is restored, the penitent are forgiven, and a new quality of life is restored." (35); "At the heart of the Christian confession is the announcement that in Christ, and supremely in the cross-resurrection event, God has acted once and for all for the redemption of the world." (150); "gathering in worship of all the ecclesial community and the confession of Christ as Lord and Savior" (209). These are characterizations of the "heart" of the confession. But the heart is in a body of teaching too, what in a later section Sell speaks of as a "worldview" in dialog with the Kuyperians and others who employ this terms. The author has helpful recourse to others so stating it, as in James Orr who speaks of the Christian as committed to a view of God, a view of man, to a view of Redemption, to a view of the purpose of God in creation and history, to a view of human destiny . . . (359)

Or, John Marsh who speaking about the same drama of God's dealings with us brings in the role of the church, the work of the Spirit in personal Christian experience and the trinitarian framework, all also so important to Sell:

. . . that story comes to us as members of the Body of Christ—the Church wherein we not only learn of God's act of redemption in the past but also live in continued experience of His redeeming and sustaining grace by the same Lord and through the same Spirit (303)

It sounds to this reviewer that we have here an over-arching narrative

theology with the Person and Work of Christ as the central chapter. Amen!

Where does Mercersburg fit into this view of the core and its worldview? Sell has presented a paper at the Mercersburg Society and here shows his knowledge and appreciation of that tradition—so much so that he cites in an endnote the bibliography of Henry Harbaugh of one of our members, Merle Fox, (474) in connection with an approving quotation from Harbaugh of the “Christological principle” (309). His views are kindred, as well, to the movement’s stress on the church, worship and the sacraments, the importance of the Incarnation, the attention to classical Christian teaching including the creeds and appreciation for the Heidelberg Catechism. However, his own focus on the Atonement prompts him to raise (legitimate) questions about whether that theme gets sufficient attention in the theology of Mercersburg’s principal figures.

In Part II Sell explores issues of religious language and the immanence and transcendence of God. In the latter case, he argues for the necessity of both, contra the reductionisms found in intra-Christian debate. In the former, apologetics as engagement with current philosophy comes center stage. We are taken on a fascinating journey through the emergence of positivism, the transition from the early to the later Wittgenstein, and on into the broad field of postmodern thought. The author makes a persuasive case for the internal contradictions in positivism (exempting itself from its own norms of verifiability), shows the limitations in both phases of Wittgenstein’s ruminations on their own grounds, and probes the vulnerabilities of popular postmodernisms. While George Lindbeck’s “postliberalism” is caught in the latter net, I don’t think Sell has Lindbeck quite right when he wonders about his commitment to propositional truth claims—a frequent charge but one regularly denied by Lindbeck, as in a recent exchange with Avery Dulles in *First Things*, and as argued persuasively in a definitive essay by Bruce Marshall in *The Thomist*, July 1989. For all that, this whole section is a brilliant deployment of Sell’s apologetic approach that makes a modest case for considering Christian faith by showing on their own terms, how alternatives prove incoherent or self-defeating. A recurring error of the foes of Christian faith is their restricted view of “experience,” eliminating *a priori* moral, aesthetic and religious realities, and thus (in a figure appearing throughout) attempting to “pick up soup with a fork.”

Sell’s warrant for engaging in argument with alternative worldviews is his belief in a defaced but not destroyed *imago Dei*, with its attendant place for general revelation, Christian convictions that make possible a common ground for such debate. Of course, arguments so mounted are not “copper-bottomed,” nor do they induce faith, but do have the function of clearing away barriers to the hearing of the Word. While Barth might argue that the Word will do this on its/his own, dogmatics being the best apologetics, Sell, for all his considerable respect for Barth, judges this to be a ghettoization of the gospel. Yes, at the end of the day, it is only the Holy Spirit through the Word enfleshed, written and preached who evokes the “Yes” of the believer. In Sell’s formulation, the convicting and convincing Word as attested by our “Christian experience” is its own best witness, that attestation confirmed in the corporate life of the church, especially its worship. Yet, the dialogue with culture in the hope of showing on its own grounds its faults is worth the effort.

This book is so rich with the detailed history of apologetics, especially in British nooks and crannies too often overlooked, that it deserves a wide readership beyond its Welsh publishing audience. Pastors wanting a refresher course in Christian thought, past and present, will be especially instructed and edified. Here is a review that “confesses” such and “commends” with enthusiasm this exercise in exploring, and advocating for, the Christian faith.

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annual convocation!*

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