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**GLIMPSES OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN
REFORMED THEOLOGY & WORSHIP**

Teresa Berger

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**Glimpses of the Spirit's Presence
in Reformed Worship**

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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 and 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 the subjects pertinent to the aims and interests of the Society.

From the Editor

F. Christopher Anderson

*"A word fitly spoken
is like apples of gold in a setting of silver."
Proverbs 25:11*

This verse summarizes what many of us thought about this year's Annual Convocation. I go so far as to say that I doubt that there could be a better introduction to the topic of the place of the Holy Spirit in Reformed tradition and worship than the word that was spoken this year.

This issue features Dr. Teresa Berger's two lectures that look at the presence of the Holy Spirit in both the Reformed tradition and in Reformed worship. Dr. Berger gave these lectures at the joint convocation of the Mercersburg Society and the Association for Reformed and Liturgical Worship at Princeton Theological Seminary on June 4th and June 5th, 2013. At that time she had somewhat abbreviated her written material, due to time constraints. This volume contains the complete written presentations. She has "slightly reworked" only a few things for their publication.

Dr. Berger is Professor of Liturgical Studies at Yale Divinity School. Previously she has taught at Duke Divinity School. She holds doctorates in both liturgical studies and in constructive theology. Her publications include *Gender Differences and Making of Liturgical History* (2011), *The Spirit in Worship—Worship in the Spirit* (2009) which she co-edited with Bryan Spinks, *Fragments of Real Presence: Liturgical Traditions in the Hands of Women* (2005) and *Dissident Daughters: Feminist Liturgies in Global Context* (2001).

Dr. Berger is an active Roman Catholic. Her word speaks volumes about ecumenism and they mirror Pope Francis' desire for the church being something more than a small chapel for people who agree on everything. Many of the Society's members were unable to be with us at Princeton this year. My word to them is that these two presentations are worth reading and preserving to read again.

*"Does not wisdom call, and does not understanding raise her voice.?"
Proverbs 8:1*

"Perfect Teacher of Truth" and "Enemy of Apathy"

The Holy Spirit's Presence in the Reformed Tradition

Teresa Berger

The two descriptions of the Holy Spirit that appear in the title -- "Perfect Teacher of Truth" and "Enemy of Apathy" -- mark the breadth of the tradition I seek to explore. The first, "Perfect Teacher of Truth," is Calvin's description of the Holy Spirit in his 1553 commentary on John 16:13.¹ The second, contemporary description, "enemy of apathy," names the Holy Spirit in one of John Bell's Iona hymns, which sings of the Spirit's role in creation, redemption, and inspiration. The hymn ends thus:

For she is the Spirit, one with God in essence, ...
she is the key opening the scriptures,
enemy of apathy and heavenly dove.²

Between Calvin's commentary on the gospel according to John and the Iona hymn of John Bell lie more than four hundred years of Reformed biblical

¹ Calvin's *Commentaries*, Vol. 5: *The Gospel according to St. John 11-21*, transl. T. H. L. Parker, ed. David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1961), 119. The translator rendered *magister veritatis* as "Master of Truth." I consider "teacher of truth" equally appropriate, if not a better translation here.

² John Bell, "Enemy of Apathy," in *Iona Abbey Worship Book* (Glasgow: Wild Goose Publications, 2001), 193.

exegesis, theological reflection, and literary creativity. The sheer breadth of this tradition, however, is only one of the difficulties that an inquiry into the Holy Spirit in the Reformed tradition faces. Moreover, this difficulty is relatively easy to surmount, namely by a ruthless focus on select themes. Other difficulties go deeper; and even if I cannot overcome them all, I will at least outline them here, before I attend to the task at hand.

I. Tracing the Spirit's Presence: Theological Preliminaries

To begin with, what constitutes evidence of the Spirit's presence is not immediately obvious. May we, for example, assume the Spirit's presence whenever theologians have written extensively about pneumatology in a given ecclesial tradition, or when confessional documents repeatedly mention the third person of the Holy Trinity? Or should we rather look for signs of the Spirit in a tradition's worship books, for example by asking whether convincing epicleses appear in its scripted liturgies? Maybe attending actual worship services would be more appropriate, to see whether the gifts of the Spirit are manifest there: glossolalia, prophecy, exorcisms, healings – or, on the other side of the ecclesial spectrum, silence and waiting for the Spirit to inspire someone to speak? Might an ethnographic inquiry help, one that asks the PIPs (“people in the pews”) how they experience the Holy Spirit? Or should we instead study how the Gospel is lived out by a particular congregation and judge from its service record whether the Spirit is present and active? Smartly, we might consider taking all these together -- yet what if they offer conflicting evidence, for example by exhibiting

deep pneumatological insights in theological tomes, but not in liturgical texts (a problem we will encounter with Calvin later on)? In short, despite the recent pneumatological turn in constructive theology,³ the question as to what on earth counts as evidence for the Spirit's presence remains an open one.

A second difficulty pertains to the presence of the Holy Spirit in the Western liturgical tradition, out of which the Reformed tradition grew. Theologically, the Western tradition shares with the Eastern tradition the givens of a Trinitarian faith. At the same time, the Western tradition has been reticent – at least since the late fourth century – in addressing the Holy Spirit directly in its public prayer.⁴ The Reformed tradition not only inherited the givens of a Trinitarian faith but also participates in the Western tradition's reticence in praying directly to the Holy Spirit in public worship.

Finally, a disclaimer or note of caution is in order. Discerning the Spirit -- this startling, inscrutable, unpredictable Holy One – will represent but a feeble attempt at catching glimpses of a divinely free Presence that cannot be “captured, silenced or restrained.”⁵ Glimpses of the Spirit are thus probably best sought with one's shoes taken off and a construction helmet on one's head. The Spirit, after all, moves where the Spirit wills (John 3:8).

³ I survey that field in the “Introduction” to *The Spirit in Worship--Worship in the Spirit*, ed. Teresa Berger and Bryan D. Spinks (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2009), XI-XXV.

⁴ I have given reasons for this in my essay “*Veni Creator Spiritus: The Elusive Real Presence of the Spirit in the Catholic Tradition*,” in *The Spirit in Worship--Worship in the Spirit*, 141-154.

⁵ Bell, “Enemy of Apathy,” 193.

So much for theological preliminaries. In turning to the question of the presence of the Spirit in the Reformed Tradition, I must begin by acknowledging that the explicit core of Reformed theology circles around other givens than pneumatology, for example God's self-disclosure in the Word, faith as a response to that Word, and the congregation gathered under the Word. In order to catch glimpses of the Holy Spirit here, one will have to display this core as presupposing or necessitating a strong pneumatology – and this is precisely what I have chosen to do. In what follows, I highlight three key themes from within Reformed theology (more are possible, as my second essay will indicate) and interpret them pneumatologically: first, the Word and the Spirit as synergy; second, the Spirit as lure toward both liturgical minimalism and freedom; and third and last, I analyze the pneumatology in John Williamson Nevin's *Mystical Presence*. I conclude my inquiry with some reflections on contemporary challenges.

II. Glimpses of the Holy Spirit in the Reformed Tradition

Word and Spirit: An Intrinsic Synergy

Regarding the sixteenth-century Reformed understanding of the Holy Spirit's role, we might say that this understanding opposed both the late-medieval emphasis on the synergy between Spirit and Church and the Radical Reformers' unmooring of the Spirit from all (or most) outward means. What lies between these two positions? The answer of the Reformed tradition is clear

enough: it is the Word, above all else, that is the site of synergy with the Holy Spirit's presence and power.

Word and Spirit are understood to be interrelated in two fundamental ways. First, the Spirit is acknowledged as the ultimate author of the biblical Word. Martin Bucer stated it succinctly: "It [the Bible] is written by the Holy Spirit."⁶ This divine authorship lies at the heart of the Bible's authority. Second, the Holy Spirit, as its author, is also the authentic interpreter of Scripture. The Spirit opens up the Word for believers and, by an inner witness to its truth, opens believers up to the Word. For the Reformed tradition, then – even if this is not always stated so explicitly – the Holy Spirit must be seen as part and parcel of the very definition of the Word of God.

A liturgical witness to this synergy between Spirit and Word can be found in the prayer for illumination before the reading and proclamation of Scripture. Calvin includes a rubric for such a prayer in his 1542 *Genevan Form of Church Prayers*. This rubric instructs the minister, upon entering the pulpit, to do the following:

the Minister commences again to pray, beseeching God for the grace of His Holy Spirit, that His Word may be faithfully expounded... and be received with such humility and obedience which it deserves. The form is left to the discretion of the Minister.⁷

⁶ Quoted in W. P. Stephens, *The Holy Spirit in the Theology of Martin Bucer* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 129. For more detail on this point, see 129-155.

⁷ English text from *Liturgies of the Western Church*, ed. Bard Thompson, 3rd ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 198f.

The rubric is clear enough, even if no scripted text for this prayer for illumination is provided: the minister is to ask God for the grace of the Holy Spirit so that the Word may be both faithfully proclaimed and humbly received (the actual prayer of a minister on the basis of this rubric would be *semi-extemporaneous* at the most). While the Genevan *Form of Church Prayers* leaves the precise words of the prayer for illumination to the minister, Calvin's Strasbourg service provided a rather lengthy, scripted prayer for illumination. The 1545 version of the text's key pneumatological part is as follows:

Let us pray that, as the whole plenitude of wisdom and light is in Him [Jesus Christ], he may guide us by His Holy Spirit to the true understanding of His holy teaching, and make it bear in us all the fruits of righteousness.⁸

A version of this prayer for illumination was also included in Calvin's Wednesday Day of Prayer service, celebrated in Geneva on a weekday that was a partial holiday in the city; shops did not open until after the Day of Prayer worship service had ended. A scripted prayer for illumination was provided before the proclamation of the Word.⁹

Two things are worth noting here. First, the scripted prayers for illumination, as well as rubrics pertaining to them, do not envision prayers addressed directly to the Holy Spirit, but rather ask either God the Father or God

⁸ English text from *John Calvin: Writings on Pastoral Piety*, ed. and with transl. by Elsie Anne McKee, *The Classics of Western Spirituality* (New York: Paulist Press, 2001), 112 and 337 fnt. 29.

the Son to act "by the Holy Spirit." Second, such prayers for illumination are sprinkled throughout sixteenth-century Calvinist texts both for public worship and for personal devotion. In Geneva, for example, a prayer for illumination opened the weekday preaching service,¹⁰ but prayers for illumination were also provided for one's personal morning devotion, prayer before studying, and before beginning one's work. "May the Lord God and Father be present with us by His Holy Spirit"; "grant me also the light of Your Spirit to illumine my understanding and my heart"; "please pour out your Holy Spirit on me"; "grant us aid by Your Holy Spirit."¹¹ These and similar prayers punctuated the daily lives of Reformed believers.

I hope that the glimpses provided above show that for the Reformed tradition the "congregation gathered under the Word" was by definition also a congregation gathered under and illumined by the Holy Spirit. We could say that wherever the Word is, there is the Spirit -- not in addition, but in elemental, intrinsic synergy, because the Spirit is both the inspirer and the interpreter of the Word.

That said, given sixteenth-century conflicts, we also find, in the Reformed tradition, traces of struggle to keep the Word central no matter the cost. In the celebration of the Lord's Supper, for example, the so-called words of

⁹ English text in McKee, *John Calvin: Writings on Pastoral Piety*, 160. McKee describes this weekly service as "[o]ne of the most distinctive forms of Calvinist Reformed worship" (*ibid.*, 157).

¹⁰ McKee, *John Calvin: Writings on Pastoral Piety*, 136f.

¹¹ All quotations from McKee, *John Calvin: Writings on Pastoral Piety*, 211-215.

institution – considered Christ’s *ipsissima verba* and the biblical warrant for the sacrament – became the theological and liturgical focal point of the rite. Other elements of eucharistic praying were eliminated or had to take second place, inter alia the presence or wording of an epiclesis. When Martin Bucer was asked to review the 1549 Anglican *Book of Common Prayer*, he tellingly changed the sequence of nouns in the epiclesis from “by thy holy spirite and worde” to *verbo et spiritu sancto tuo*, by your Word and Holy Spirit.¹² Clearly, no conviction of the synergy between Spirit and Word was allowed, in the sixteenth-century struggles, to cast doubt on the centrality of the Word.

A look beyond the sixteenth century and the European context is in order here, even if I can only highlight two elements from the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century North American context.

The first element is a broader cultural consequence of the Reformed emphasis on the centrality of the Word, noticeable especially in New England Puritan communities. I am thinking here of the emphasis on literacy, born not least of all out of the insistence on individual access to God’s Word. In a recent essay on worship and literacy in Puritan New England, the Yale historian Harry Stout emphasized the close connection between print, literacy, and Puritan practices of worship. Stout stressed especially the connection between the

¹² Martin Bucer, *Censura*, in E. C. Whitaker, *Martin Bucer and The Book of Common Prayer*, Alcuin Club Collections 55 (Great Wakering: Mayhew-McCrimmon, 1974), 10-173, here 53. See also Friedrich Lurz, “‘Durch die Kraft des heiligen Geistes.’ Die Wiederentdeckung der eucharistischen Geist-Epiklese im 16.

printed, vernacular Word -- in the form of the *Geneva Bible* (1560) -- and the high level of literacy among Puritans. Male literacy rates in New England approached universality, and female literacy rates were not much lower.¹³ In late seventeenth-century New Haven, for example, all sons of the inhabitants were to be taught to read and write, and all daughters were to be taught to read. A monetary penalty enforced this legislation.¹⁴ The correlation between literacy and worship is no surprise. The primary medium of communication, and thus the focus of worship, in a religious tradition centered on the Word will be verbal: the public reading and expository preaching and interpretation of the printed, vernacular Bible. A highly literate culture is thus produced by – and itself produces and re-produces – particular practices of worship. Examples are the Puritan “plain style” sermons that develop a binding literary form, namely a logically ordered series of propositional statements, as a way of knowing.¹⁵ So far so obvious. The intriguing question, given my focus on pneumatology, is this: in the particular Puritan medium of communication, how will the presence of the Holy Spirit be configured? Clearly, the work of the Holy Spirit has to be linked

Jahrhundert,” *Jahrbuch für Liturgik und Hymnologie* 39 (2000): 9-34, esp. 22f.

¹³ Harry S. Stout, “Liturgy, Literacy, and Worship in Puritan Anglo-America, 1560-1670,” in *By the Vision of Another World: Worship in American History*, ed. James D. Bratt, Calvin Institute of Christian Worship Liturgical Studies Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012), 11-35, esp. 15, 24-29.

¹⁴ See Harold J. Bingham, *History of Connecticut* (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, 1962), 1:153.

¹⁵ For more, see Stout, “Liturgy, Literacy, and Worship in Puritan Anglo-America,” 30.

to the basic way in which God is understood to be present in this worship tradition: namely, as Word. The Spirit's work thus will be seen as illuminating, clarifying, enlivening, and revealing the Word, both written and proclaimed.

A second element I wish to highlight moves us into the eighteenth century and beyond the American Revolution. What I described above for the sixteenth-century Reformed tradition is echoed nicely in a couple of places in the 1788 American *Directory for Worship*, which sought to revise and update the *Westminster Directory* for North American Presbyterian use. To be more precise, the texts I am interested in appear in the initial *draft* of what would become the 1788 *Directory*. These texts did not gain final approval, in large part because they offered actual scripted prayers – in contradistinction to mere rubrics, or directions for prayers to be prayed semi-extemporaneously by the minister. A voting majority rejected these scripted prayers (as well as the preface of the draft *Directory*), thus leaving them without any authoritative standing.¹⁶ Yet even though non-authoritative, the texts nevertheless offer a couple of intriguing insights. First is the suggested scripted opening prayer for the Sunday morning service, which in the draft *Directory* included the following mention of the Holy Spirit:

HOLY, holy, holy, LORD GOD Almighty! ... We come to thee, our Creator and Redeemer, with homage, adoration, and praise. Enable us, O LORD! by thy good Spirit, to attend to the holy duties to which thou

¹⁶ For a detailed account, see Julius Melton, *Presbyterian Worship in America: Changing Patterns Since 1787* (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1967), 11-27.

art calling us at this time, without distraction of mind, and with reverence and godly fear.¹⁷

One can do much worse than opening a Sunday service with this prayer!

A second example of the recognition of the Spirit's role appears in the examination of candidates before admission to the church. The draft *Directory* states that "knowledge and belief" of the following must be ascertained from the candidates:

That the enlightening and sanctifying influences of the HOLY GHOST are absolutely necessary to lead us into the saving understanding of the Sacred Scriptures.¹⁸

Granted, both the draft *Directory* and the two examples from it may seem a marginal source to draw on, but these scripted prayers from a time soon after the American Revolution do shed some light on Spirit-filled prayers in the history of Reformed worship on this side of the Atlantic.

The Holy Spirit and Liturgical Minimalism and Freedom

I come to a second theme that marks the Reformed tradition, or at least its worship, namely the predilection for both liturgical minimalism and freedom. What might their correlation be with particulars of pneumatology?

With respect to the Reformed emphasis on liturgical minimalism or simplicity, one might argue the following. Even if recent studies have

¹⁷ Quoted in Charles Washington Baird, *Eutaxia, or the Presbyterian Liturgies: Historical Sketches* (New York: M. W. Dodd, 1855), 233.

¹⁸ Quoted in Baird, *Eutaxia*, 240.

undermined the assumption of symbolic poverty in Reformation rites, Calvin's "war against the idols"¹⁹ clearly had an iconoclastic thrust. This thrust, in the form of a forceful rejection of much of medieval-catholic materiality, had a positive vision at its core. Liturgical austerity served the quest for true worship, understood as "worship in Spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). Clearing ecclesial space of inherited, non-biblical "clutter" thus aided the -- always spiritual -- encounter with God. As Calvin put it in his commentary on the gospel according to John, with reference to John 4:24:

why should we fear when we hear that God is pleased with this bare and simple worship, which is disdained by the Papists because it is not swollen with a mass of ceremonies? And what good does the empty show of the flesh do them, which Christ says quenches the Spirit? What it is to worship God in Spirit and in truth ... is to remove the coverings of the ancient ceremonies and retain simply what is spiritual in the worship of God. For the truth of the worship of God rests in the Spirit.²⁰

How was God encountered in worship once the space had been cleared?

The answers are familiar: liturgical space is conceived primarily as auditory space, with the architectural focus being the pulpit. Materially, the Word is present as the Bible, newly available in printed form, now the key liturgical book governing both service and sermon. Worship has become logocentric; the

¹⁹ See Carlos M. Eire, *War Against the Idols: The Reformation of Worship from Erasmus to Calvin* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), esp. ch. 6.

²⁰ *Calvin's Commentaries*, Vol. 4: *The Gospel according to St. John 1-10*, transl. T. H. L. Parker, ed. David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1959), 101.

dominant medium is verbal.²¹ The ritual authority figure and liturgical symbol-bearer is the dispenser of the Word: the minister-preacher. Knowledge of the faith is encapsulated in the ability to recite, in the vernacular, the Decalogue, the Lord's Prayer, and the Apostle's Creed.²² What might mitigate this starkly logocentric understanding of worship is a forceful re-inscription of the co-constitutive presence of the Holy Spirit in the Word, as its author, inspirer, and interpreter. Liturgical logocentricity might then be understood as a witness to the presence and freedom of the Spirit to move.

A second emphasis -- or better, a strand within the Reformed tradition -- develops an additional sign of freedom that marks true, spiritual worship, namely freedom from set liturgical forms. Such forms -- especially scripted, prescribed prayers -- come to be seen as inimical to the Spirit's unfettered, authentic movement in worship. True spiritual worship requires freedom from (human-

²¹ This logocentricity -- rooted in an understanding of rhetoric as persuasion, as Bruce Gordon insists -- can no doubt be seen as having its own sensuous appeal and power. I am grateful to Bruce Gordon for reading and commenting on my two essays.

²² That some older women found this switch particularly troublesome is clear from the Genevan Consistory notes. One woman acknowledged that she "prays God to give her the Holy Spirit" and that she will not stop "making the prayers she has been accustomed to on her knees." Most of the women brought before the Consistory stated that they did not understand or remember much from the sermons, and several were accused of "muttering" (Latin prayers) during the service. See Robert Kingdon, "Worship in Geneva before and after the Reformation," in *Worship in Medieval and Early Modern Europe: Change and Continuity in Religious Practice*, ed. Karin Maag and John D. Witvliet (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2004), 41-60, here 43.

made) forms. This argument surfaces, for example, in the English-speaking Reformed tradition of the seventeenth century, initially not as hostility to all set liturgical forms but only to some features of the *Book of Common Prayer*, especially its scripted texts, rubrics, and ceremonies, as these were enforced by magistrates.²³ Yet theological suspicion of set liturgical forms had been foreshadowed in the sixteenth century, for example in Zwingli's insistence that a sacramental action cannot have any inherent power, since this would tie the freedom of God's Spirit to human performance and make the "divine Spirit be ... a slave to the sacraments."²⁴ Similarly, Martin Bucer -- when drafting liturgical texts for the reform-minded Archbishop of Cologne in 1543 -- argued against a full-fledged eucharistic prayer with an epiclesis on the basis that these would give the impression that human words had sacramental power when only Christ's own words of institution consecrated bread and wine.²⁵

The seventeenth-century English-speaking inheritors of these Reformed positions advanced their own suspicions of scripted liturgies in the context of a struggle within the Anglican Church. In turning against set, non-biblical

²³ This is expertly laid out by Bryan D. Spinks in his "The Origins of the Antipathy to Set Liturgical Forms in the English-Speaking Reformed Tradition," in *Christian Worship in Reformed Churches Past and Present*, ed. Lukas Vischer (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 66-82. Spinks analyzes four factors that went into the making of this antipathy, see esp. 67. -- I am grateful to Bryan Spinks for reading and commenting on my two essays.

²⁴ Huldreich Zwingli, *Commentary on True and False Religion* (1525), ed. Samuel Macauley Jackson and Clarence Nevin Heller (Durham, NC: The Labyrinth Press, 1981), # 15, here 183.

liturgical forms, these English-speaking Calvinists were aided by a literary innovation, the 1560 vernacular *Geneva Bible*, which became the one liturgical book necessary. Not surprisingly, the *Westminster Directory* of 1645 foregoes set liturgical texts, offering only rubrics, with themes of prayers to be extemporized by the minister.²⁶ When some of the seventeenth-century English-speaking "godly" sailed the ocean blue, they brought with them to New England both the *Geneva Bible* and their antipathy to scripted liturgical forms. A prominent minister among them, John Cotton (+ 1652), argued at length that the only liturgical book necessary for worship was the Bible. In his famous *The Way of the Churches of Christ in New-England*, Cotton insisted that "the first Commandement requireth us to worship him [God] with his owne onely true worship, as he hath appointed in his Word, without adding ought thereto, or taking ought therefrom."²⁷ Cotton described the worship of New England congregations as rooted

not in any *prescribed* forme of prayer, or *studied* Liturgie, but in such a manner, as the Spirit of grace and of prayer (who teacheth all the people of God, what and how to pray, Rom. 8.26, 27) helpeth our infirmities.²⁸

²⁵ See Lurz, "'Durch die Kraft des heiligen Geistes.' Die Wiederentdeckung der eucharistischen Geist-Epiklese," 18-22.

²⁶ See *The Westminster Directory being A Directory for the Publique Worship of God in the Three Kingdomes*, ed. Ian Breward (Bramcote: Gove Books, 1980).

²⁷ John Cotton, *The Way of the Churches of Christ in New-England, Measured by the Golden Reed of the Sanctuary* (London: M. Simmons, 1645), 65; see also 70-76, where Cotton argued this point in depth.

²⁸ Cotton, *The Way of the Churches of Christ in New-England*, 66f. Emphases in text.

The aversion to set liturgical forms -- understood as human constraints on the Spirit's freedom -- gained new life in the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century revival movements that swept North America. There too, liturgical freedom and spontaneity were collated with the Spirit's freedom to move, while scripted worship represented a refusal of the Spirit's unfettered power to inspire.²⁹

At the same time, the Reformed tradition in North America wore (and continues to wear) a coat of many colors, and antipathy to liturgical forms was not the only possible Reformed position. In fact, opposition to un-scripted and revival-based practices of worship was a part of the beginnings of the Mercersburg Movement in the 1840s. John Williamson Nevin, in one of his later writings in defense of the *Provisional Liturgy*, offered a sharp critique of the so-called "freedom" from liturgical forms. Nevin wrote:

It is a great misnomer to call extemporary prayer free. For a congregation, it is just the opposite of this, ... Your ranting exhortations, born from the feeling of the moment, and your eloquently sentimental harangues to the Deity, got up to please the ears of a refined audience, are both alike, in this view, an outrage upon the true freedom of Christian worship.³⁰

²⁹ For details, see Julius Melton, *Presbyterian Worship in America: Changing Patterns Since 1787* (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1967), esp. 59-63.

³⁰ John Williamson Nevin, *The Liturgical Question with Reference to the Provisional Liturgy of the German Reformed Church: A Report by the "Liturgical Committee"* (Philadelphia: Lindsay & Blakiston, 1862), p. 8, see also p. 21. Available online at:

Having invoked John Williamson Nevin, I conclude this sketch of glimpses of the Holy Spirit in the Reformed tradition with a closer look at Nevin's magnum opus, *The Mystical Presence*.

The Holy Spirit in J. W. Nevin's *Mystical Presence* (1846)

My remarks here will focus on the pneumatological contours discernible in *The Mystical Presence*. Granted that the doctrine of the Holy Spirit is not at the heart of Nevin's theology, the Spirit nevertheless plays a decisive role in the overall theological argument made, in terms of what is argued for as well as what is argued against.

The heart of Nevin's theology in *The Mystical Presence* is the doctrine of the incarnation, said to contain "the whole gospel comprehended in a word... the key that unlocks the sense of all God's works and brings to light the true meaning of the universe."³¹ Nevin's language is impassioned at this point, emphasizing in print, even visually, the magnitude of the fact that "THE WORD BECAME FLESH!"³² and that "The incarnation is the FACT of all facts."³³ Thinking from the incarnation forward, Nevin probes the "question of the

http://dspace.lancasterseminary.edu/jspui/bitstream/123456789/159/1/Liturgical_question.pdf. Last accessed April 5, 2013.

³¹ I use the recent edition of Nevin's *The Mystical Presence And the Doctrine of the Reformed Church on the Lord's Supper*, edited by Linden J. DeBie as the first volume in The Mercersburg Theology Study Series (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2012), here 174.

³² Nevin, *The Mystical Presence*, 174.

Church” which he identifies as “the great life-problem of the age.”³⁴ Nevin interprets the church akin to an *incarnatio continua*, as “the historical continuation of the life of Jesus Christ, in the world.”³⁵ Two points are important to note in this connection. The first is Nevin’s insistence that “Christianity ... is a *Life*”³⁶ (rather than, say, a set of moral principles deduced from the example of Jesus), with the church being “in the fullest sense the depository of the life of Christ himself.”³⁷ The second point to note is Nevin’s insistence that “The Spirit ... constitutes the form of Christ’s presence and activity in the church.”³⁸ Both of these convictions are vital to Nevin’s theology of the Eucharist, which he claims is in line with the sixteenth-century Reformed doctrine.

³³ Ibid., 184.

³⁴ Ibid., 11.

³⁵ John Williamson Nevin, “The Church: A Sermon, Preached at the Opening of the Synod of the German Reformed Church, at Carlisle, October 15, 1846” (Chambersburg, PA: Publication Office of the German Reformed Church, 1847), 16.

³⁶ Nevin, *The Mystical Presence*, 190 (emphasis mine). I note that Nevin’s book came soon after a series of short essays had appeared in the *Weekly Messenger* – the newsletter of the German Reformed Church – in which a Connecticut Congregationalist minister (and Yale graduate) turned adherent of the Catholic Apostolic Church, William Watson Andrews, had argued that the Eucharist was a fruit of the incarnation and granted true participation in Christ’s life. See W. W. A., “The Sacrament of the Eucharist, Nos. 1-4,” *Weekly Messenger New Series* 11:17 (Jan 7, 1846) to 11:20 (Jan 28, 1846).

³⁷ Nevin, “The Church: A Sermon,” 17.

³⁸ Nevin, *The Mystical Presence*, 197.

In the Eucharist, Nevin sees the church “emphatically concentrated”³⁹ since “[w]e communicate in the Lord’s Supper ... with the living Saviour himself in the fullness of his glorified person made present to us for the purpose by the power of the Holy Ghost.”⁴⁰ Clearly, the Spirit is essential in and for this eucharistic theology. So far, so Reformed. Nevin is able to draw on Calvin at this point and quotes him approvingly at some length,⁴¹ not least the section of the *Institutes* dedicated to “The Sacred Supper of Christ.” One passage from this section is especially important for Nevin with regard to the role of the Holy Spirit:

It may seem incredible indeed that the flesh of Christ should reach us from such immense local distance, so as to become our food. But we must remember how far the secret power of the Holy Spirit transcends all our senses ... Let faith embrace then what the understanding cannot grasp; namely that the Spirit unites things which are locally separated.⁴²

Drawing on Calvin and other sixteenth-century reformers, Nevin offers a sustained critique of the “modern Puritan theory” that has lost this “Old Reformed” sense of the sacramental, mysterious, miraculous nature of the Lord’s Supper, which understood the Spirit to work “in a way that transcends not only the human understanding, but the ordinary course of the world also.”⁴³ Yet Nevin also takes issue with his Reformed contemporaries whom he criticizes based on

³⁹ Ibid., 40.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 46.

⁴¹ Nevin reads Calvin’s theology more or less as a unified whole, and through the lens especially of the later writings.

⁴² Nevin, *The Mystical Presence*, 59, quoting from Calvin’s *Institutes* 4.17.10.

⁴³ Ibid., 104f.

his own, incarnation-centered reading of the Reformed tradition. Such is the case when Nevin insists that in the Lord's Supper "the believer communicates not only with the Spirit of Christ or with his [Christ's] divine nature, but with Christ himself in his whole living person; so that he may be said to be fed and nourished by his very flesh and blood."⁴⁴ The insistence on the continuing importance of the incarnation leads Nevin forcefully to spell out eucharistic communion as "not simply with the divinity of Christ, but with his humanity also."⁴⁵ Most importantly, he argues against a reading of the Reformed tradition that separates Christ's presence from the Holy Spirit's presence, as if the latter were a mere proxy for the former. Nevin insists that the "Spirit of Christ is not his representative or surrogate simply."⁴⁶ He identifies precisely such a tendency as a key vulnerability ("embarrassment") in Calvin's theology, noting that for Calvin,

Christ's body is altogether in heaven only. How then is its vivific virtue to be carried into the believer? By the miraculous energy of the Holy Ghost; which however cannot be said in the case so much to bring his life down to us, as it serves rather to raise us in the exercise of faith to the presence of the Saviour on high. ... the representation is confused and brings the mind no proper satisfaction.⁴⁷

Nevin suggests that if Calvin had substituted "the idea of the organic law of Christ's human life" for the "vivific virtue of Christ's flesh," his exposition

⁴⁴ Ibid., 47.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 47. Nevin stresses this again in his argument against Hodge, see *ibid.*, 285.

⁴⁶ Nevin, *The Mystical Presence*, 196.

⁴⁷ Nevin, *The Mystical Presence*, 140.

would have assumed "at once a more consistent and intelligible form."⁴⁸ Nevin writes:

Bound as he [Calvin] felt himself to be to resist everything like the idea of a local presence, he found it necessary to resolve the whole process into a special supernatural agency of the Holy Ghost, as a sort of foreign medium introduced to meet the wants of the case. ... his theory it must be allowed carries here a somewhat fantastic character.⁴⁹

In seeking to "relieve" Calvin's doctrine "from its most serious difficulties,"⁵⁰ Nevin anchors the Spirit's sacramental communication of Christ's life ecclesially, in the church as the form in which Christ's life continues to be made present. The argument, once again, is rooted in the incarnation, in which the Word assumed humanity into union with himself; a union that then "*passes over to his people; thus constituting the CHURCH.*"⁵¹ This ecclesial "*union of Christ with believers is wrought by the power of the HOLY GHOST.*"⁵² Nevin's argument is worth quoting at some length here:

It is by the Spirit the divine life is sustained and advanced in us at every point, ... for this very reason we have no right to dissolve this unity again in our thoughts by making the presence of the Spirit a mere substitute for the presence of Christ himself. Where the one is, there the other is truly and really at the same time. ... the Spirit, proceeding from the Father and Son and subsisting in everlasting union with both, constitutes the form, in which and by which the new creation in Christ Jesus upholds itself and reveals itself in all its extent.⁵³

⁴⁸ Ibid., 141.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 141f.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 144.

⁵¹ Ibid., 149.

⁵² Ibid., 155.

⁵³ Ibid., 155.

Nevin, it seems to me, has put his finger on a real problem here, namely that an insistence on the presence of the Holy Spirit in the Eucharist can invite a correlation of the Spirit's presence with Christ's real absence. Or, as Nevin himself describes it, Christ is "held to be personally absent and present only by proxy or substitution, in the separate agency of the Holy Ghost."⁵⁴ Against such a "contradictory and unintelligible and false" position, Nevin eloquently states his own conviction thus:

Christ does dwell in us by his Spirit; but only as his Spirit constitutes the very form and power of his own presence as the *incarnate* and everlasting Word. ... the life thus wrought in our souls by his [the Spirit's] agency is not a production out of nothing but the very life of Jesus himself organically continued in this way over into our persons.⁵⁵

More could be said about the rich theology displayed in *The Mystical Presence*, but I hope the contours of Nevin's doctrine of the Holy Spirit, so decisive for his argument, are now visible. To summarize my reading of the evidence: Nevin insists, first, on eucharistic communion as a communication of the whole life of Christ as begun in his incarnation by the power of the Holy Spirit. Nevin argues, second, that the eucharistic presence of Christ is real, mystical, and sacramental, effected by the same Spirit. Finally, Nevin argues against seeing the presence of the Spirit in the Lord's Supper as a proxy, substitute, or surrogate for Christ's own presence.⁵⁶ Taking these three points

⁵⁴ Ibid., 171.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 172f.

⁵⁶ W. Bradford Littlejohn locates in this point a key difference between Nevin and Charles Hodge, who – according to Littlejohn – “clearly understands the Spirit as a representative who

together, we can see that a proper doctrine of the Holy Spirit is a prerequisite, or the key, to a proper appreciation of the doctrine of the incarnation, of the church, and of the Eucharist. The theological confluence in Nevin's thinking is elegant – or so it seems to a Catholic at least. All three – incarnation, church, and Eucharist – are here rooted in a vision of the Spirit descending on materiality (bodies/matter) and vivifying it with divine life. Or, to put this differently: God gives not something (e.g., a moral example, a symbol, a memory) but God's very self, and that means life in fullness. Small wonder that the *Mercersburg Provisional Liturgy*, composed within a decade of Nevin's book, sprouted an epiclesis as part of the eucharistic prayer that in many ways summarized Nevin's vision of the Holy Spirit's vivifying work (I will look at this liturgy in my second essay).

III. Concluding Thoughts

The glimpses of pneumatological themes in the Reformed tradition have, I hope, offered some insights into this tradition's riches (and lacunae), as I perceive them. Yet even if a theological tradition is -- at its best -- about a living and present faith, an account of past thinking

is present to us *in lieu* of Christ, rather than the means of making Christ, body and soul, divine and human, present to us.” W. Bradford Littlejohn, *The Mercersburg Theology and the Quest for*

alone cannot suffice for today's world with its distinctive contours and challenges. What then might we say in an attempt to hear the echoes of the Reformed tradition together with the voices of today?

I begin with the new Presbyterian Hymnal *Glory to God* that is about to be published. Its hymns, psalms, and spiritual songs open with a section dedicated to "The Triune God," and the hymnal as a whole contains a welcome breadth of Spirit-songs, from a rendition of the ancient *Veni Creator Spiritus*, an Isaac Watts hymn, and the African American spiritual "Every Time I feel the Spirit," to contemporary texts from around the world, including a Taizé chant and a Yoruba song. When we turn from this richness of Spirit-songs to the "Theological Vision Statement" that accompanied the work on the new hymnal, a surprise awaits: there is no mention of the Holy Spirit anywhere in this text.⁵⁷ A reference to Pentecost merely undergirds a call to "speak and hear the gospel in many tongues and languages."⁵⁸ Far be it from me to question the hard labor, and the "hard-won compromises" (Mary Louise Bringle,

Reformed Catholicity (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2009), 54.

⁵⁷ The statement is available online at <http://www.presbyterianhymnal.org/committeeStatements.html>. Last accessed April 8, 2013.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

chair of the Presbyterian Committee on Congregational Song) that go into the work on a new hymnal. It is a daunting task indeed. Yet I cannot but contrast the pneumatological void of the "Theological Vision Statement" with the voices from the Reformed tradition I have here highlighted, never mind with John Bell's hymn, "Enemy of Apathy," which narrates the whole of salvation history with a focus on the Holy Spirit. On a more positive note: if the Reformed tradition might be said to exhibit sustained pneumatological insights in theological texts but not necessarily in its worship materials, the new hymnal reverses this, by attending to the Holy Spirit much more insistently in its songs than in its theological vision statement.

A second point worth noting has to do with the shifting ecclesial context in and for which the new hymnal was produced. The "Theological Vision Statement" describes this context as follows:

The next Presbyterian collection of hymns and songs ... will be used by a church many of whose members have not had life-long formation by Scripture and basic Christian doctrine, much less Reformed theology. It is meant for a church marked by growing diversity in liturgical practice. Moreover, it addresses a church divided by conflicts... To inspire and embolden a church facing these formidable challenges, the overarching theme of the

collection will be God's powerful acts of creation, redemption, and final transformation.⁵⁹

Certainly, inspiring and emboldening a church facing such formidable challenges is a vital task. I wonder, however, whether the Holy Spirit must not be named here, as the ultimate One who inspires and emboldens the church? The work of human hands alone seems quite inadequate to the task. This is true not least because there are additional pressing challenges which are not mentioned here. Two of these carry particular implications for Reformed worship. The first is a profound cultural shift. We have moved from a culture rooted in literacy to a culture with a distinct preference for the visual and experiential over words and concepts, especially through the possibilities of multi-media modes of representation. The challenge of this cultural shift for churches in the Reformed tradition is obvious: What happens with a liturgical tradition that is Word-centered and at least historically closely tied to literacy, when its contemporaries move to privileging the visual?

A second challenge comes with a related cultural shift, namely the migration into a digital world. More and more people today live and move and have their being online, at least for part of their day. And the tribe of digital natives is growing fast, while the digital immigrants are beginning to decline and face extinction. What does it mean for Reformed worship -- "offline worship," that is -- to have an ever-growing, vibrant world of liturgical experience,

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Ibid.

experimentation, and yes, whole worship services available online? How does the Spirit move in cyberspace, and what pressures does this space bring to bear on Reformed convictions about worship? Cyberspace, after all, is supremely cluttered, and its multimedia productions now far exceed anything the late-medieval Roman Catholic world had to offer in terms of graven images. This new digital world, in other words, prizes the opposite of Reformed aesthetic minimalism. What are the implications for contemporary Reformed worship?

Finally, I raise a question that many of you will already be asking yourselves. I do not have an answer, yet find it important to ask and acknowledge the question nevertheless. It is this: given that the Reformed tradition is explicitly *semper reformanda*, what might a contemporary "reform of the Reformed tradition" look like? Where might the Spirit be brooding, waiting to give birth, to inspire, and to astound? I myself hope that answers to this question will go beyond the typical invocation of the Spirit as authorizing the spontaneous and the new. With its iconoclastic thrust, the Reformed tradition seems well positioned to bring into play other markers of the Spirit's presence, for example the Spirit as "Enemy of Apathy," or -- more challenging still, especially for theological thinking about worship -- the Spirit as "Adversary, a cunning opponent, a merciful foe, a prophetic challenge, a violent wind, and a purgative fire, blowing and burning away whatever

chaff would keep her beloved children from life."⁶⁰ The Reformed tradition has the theological givens to render visible – as maybe no other ecclesial tradition can -- these easily forgotten roles of the Holy Spirit in worship.

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⁶⁰ Matthew Myer Boulton, "The Adversary: Agony, Irony, and the Liturgical Role of the Holy Spirit," in *The Spirit in Worship--Worship in the Spirit*, ed. Teresa Berger and Bryan D. Spinks (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2009), 59-77, here 77.

"The Powerful Benediction of Thy Holy Spirit": Glimpses of the Spirit's Presence in Reformed Worship

Teresa Berger

Introduction

The title of this essay invokes "the powerful benediction" of the Holy Spirit -- a phrase taken from the famed epiclesis of the 1857 *Provisional Liturgy* of the German Reformed Church. It would be easy enough to follow the title's lead and focus my reflections solely on this liturgy, mapping glimpses of the Spirit's presence onto the history, provenance, theology, and struggles surrounding this particular epiclesis. Yet such a singular focus on a scripted invocation of the Holy Spirit would represent a theological shortcut; and one that occludes other vital markers of the Spirit's presence in worship. Moreover, behind the presence or absence of epicletic prayers lie more foundational theological judgments, for example regarding sacramental mediation. How a tradition conceives of the relationship between a sacramental sign and the thing signified matters for what is prayed over bread and wine (and over water). Are these material elements external signs only? Or might they be instruments of the reality they signify? In the latter case, the Holy Spirit can be thought to use these elements to mediate grace. An epiclesis that invokes the Spirit over bread and wine makes much more sense within the latter theological view than within the former. Finally, it is worth noting that liturgical texts as such do not always

mirror faithfully the depth of a theological conviction. In Calvin's writings, for example, the theological reflections (especially later ones) stress the role of the Spirit much more explicitly than the liturgical texts do. Sue Rozeboom has recently analyzed this surprising "failure on Calvin's part to assimilate his robust sacramental pneumatology *liturgically*."⁶¹ I find the possible reasons she suggests for this failure plausible, namely the presence of enthusiastic spiritualist communities in Strasbourg on the one hand, and the stringent Reformed emphasis on the words of institution in the celebration of the Lord's Supper, on the other hand.⁶² I would add to Rozeboom's suggestion a point I stressed earlier, namely that the Western tradition as a whole is marked by a certain reticence regarding prayers to the Holy Spirit in public worship.

In what follows, I propose to look at four liturgical themes and elements that offer insights into the relationship between the Holy Spirit and worship. These four themes and elements are: the Holy Spirit as enabler of true worship; the Holy Spirit's role in baptism; the Holy Spirit and the so-called Reformed *sursum corda*; and finally, the 1857 *Provisional Liturgy* and its epiclesis. I will have to treat the first two somewhat briefly in order to explore the latter two in more depth.

⁶¹ Sue A. Rozeboom, *The Provenance of John Calvin's Emphasis on the Role of the Holy Spirit Regarding the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper*, PhD dissertation, University of Notre Dame, 2010. Available online at: <http://etd.nd.edu/ETD-db/theses/available/etd-11202010-211042/unrestricted/RozeboomSA112010D.pdf>, here p. 342. Last accessed March 28, 2013.

1. True Prayer and Worship: Empowered by the Holy Spirit

The first point I wish to stress is theologically basic, in the sense of being foundational. In discerning glimpses of the Spirit's presence in worship, we do well to begin with insisting that there simply is no true prayer, no true worship of God, without the Spirit's empowerment. Other liturgical markers for the Spirit's presence – e.g., an explicit epiclesis – will have to be interpreted in light of this theological fundamental. This means, for example, that the Spirit's presence in worship should not be linked all too easily to a prayer that invokes the coming of the Spirit half-way through the service -- as if the Holy Spirit were not already present in the gathered community long before an actual epiclesis is prayed. The Reformed tradition knows well that the Holy Spirit is the enabler of all true prayer and worship. This is, after all, a biblical truth: "the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words" (Rom 8:26). Calvin, in his *Commentary* on Paul's letter to the Romans, offers an extensive exegesis of this text, worth quoting at length:

... the presence of heavenly grace already shines forth in the very zeal for prayer, because no one of his own accord conceives devout and godly prayers. Unbelievers do indeed blurt out their prayers, but they merely mock God, because there is no sincerity or seriousness in them, or correctly ordered pattern [!]. The Spirit, therefore, must prescribe the manner of our praying. Paul calls the groans into which we break forth by the impulse of the Spirit *unutterable*, because they far exceed the capacity of our intellect. The Spirit of God ... stirs up in our hearts the prayers which it is proper for us to address to God. In the second place,

⁶² See Rozeboom, *John Calvin's Emphasis on the Role of the Holy Spirit*, 367.

He affects our hearts in such a way that these prayers penetrate into heaven itself by their fervency. Paul has spoken in this way for the purpose of attributing the whole of prayer more significantly to the grace of the Spirit. We are bidden to knock. But no one of his own accord could premeditate a single syllable, unless God were to knock to gain admission to our souls by the secret impulse of His Spirit.⁶³

Fast-forwarding from Calvin to a contemporary Reformed source, the current Presbyterian *Book of Worship* wisely opens with a section that offers prayers in preparation for worship. One of the prayers, intended for worship leaders, captures well the point I seek to make here:

Ever-present God,
without your Word we have nothing to say;
without your Spirit we are helpless.
Give us your Holy Spirit,
that we may lead your people in prayer, ...
Through Jesus Christ our Lord.⁶⁴

So much for the basic theological truth that the Holy Spirit is the source and empowerment of all Christian prayer. Granted, the Reformed tradition is likely to emphasize this point in any case, owing to its stress on the absolute incapacity of human beings to do good. Still, the assertion that “the Spirit enables our worship is not first and foremost bad news about our shortcomings; it is good news about God’s grace,” as Martha Moore-Keish has insisted.⁶⁵

⁶³ Calvin’s *Commentaries: The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Romans and to the Thessalonians*, transl. Ross MacKenzie, ed. David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1961), 178.

⁶⁴ *Book of Common Worship* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1993), 30.

⁶⁵ Martha L. Moore-Keish, “How Shall We Worship?,” in *Conversations with the Confessions: Dialogue in the Reformed*

2. Baptism: Of Water and the Spirit

The second site at which we catch glimpses of the Holy Spirit in the Reformed liturgical tradition also touches on basics of Christian worship, in this case baptism. If one enters the Christian community and its worship life through baptism, what is the Spirit’s role in this? One answer each, from the sixteenth-century Reformed tradition and from a contemporary worship text, will have to suffice here.

In his baptismal rite, Calvin explicates the biblical meaning of baptism on the basis of Christ’s promise of new life. Our Lord promises “to regenerate us by His Holy Spirit to new life.”⁶⁶ Although Christ himself can be seen as the agent of this regeneration, the Spirit effects it in the person baptized. Furthermore, the Spirit then leads the baptized to God’s Word, and guides and governs them “to do in us works that are pleasing to Him.”⁶⁷ Calvin thus identifies two graces in baptism, namely regeneration/forgiveness of sin and sanctification, i.e., empowerment to live a new life in Christ.⁶⁸ The Spirit effects both in the believer. Calvin’s baptismal rite itself is succinct and unadorned; the

Tradition, ed. Joseph D. Small (Louisville, KY: Geneva Press, 2005), 187-206, here 190.

⁶⁶ English text from *John Calvin: Writings on Pastoral Piety*, ed. and transl. by Elsie Anne McKee, *The Classics of Western Spirituality* (New York: Paulist Press, 2001), 153.

⁶⁷ McKee, *John Calvin: Writings on Pastoral Piety*, 154.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 156.

lengthiest part is the detailed explication, by the minister, of the biblical meaning of baptism.

If we fast-forward, once again, from Calvin to the baptismal rite of the current Presbyterian *Book of Worship*, a much richer euchology becomes visible. For one thing, a number of epicleses are now offered, as well as guidelines for extemporaneous prayer. One of the scripted texts includes a double epiclesis, on the water and on those to be baptized; another contains a double epiclesis on the congregation and on the water. The latter text reads:

Pour out your Spirit upon us
and upon this water,
that this font may be your womb of new birth.
May all who now pass through these waters
be delivered from death to life,
from bondage to freedom,
from sin to righteousness.
Bind them to the household of faith,
guard them from all evil.
Strengthen them to serve you with joy
until the day you make all things new.⁶⁹

In this prayer, as well as in Calvin's earlier text, the Spirit is understood to effect new life in the baptized, a life the Spirit continues to sustain and empower. This includes a life of prayer, too deep for words.

If this understanding of the Spirit's work in baptism is indeed basic and for the most part shared among ecclesial traditions, my next point highlights a quintessentially Reformed liturgical element.

3. The Reformed *Sursum Corda*

The so-called Reformed *sursum corda* – which originated with Guillaume Farel's 1533 order of worship and was taken up by Calvin – is a many-sided text. Following the recitation of the words of institution by the minister, the *sursum corda* concludes a brief exhortation directed at the congregation. In Calvin's *Form of Church Prayers*, the text reads as follows:

let us lift our spirits and hearts on high where Jesus Christ is in the glory of His Father, whence we expect Him at our redemption. Let us not be fascinated by these earthly and corruptible elements which we see with our eyes and touch with our hands, seeking Him there as though He were enclosed in the bread or wine. Then only shall our souls be disposed to be nourished and vivified by His substance when they are lifted up above all earthly things, attaining even to heaven...⁷⁰

Four points are worth noting. First, this is not a prayer addressed to God but rather an exhortation addressed to the congregation, appearing in a rite that is already weighted heavily toward exhortatory speech acts. Second (and not unrelated to the first), the *sursum corda*'s movement is almost the reverse of an epicletic one, since the exhortation encourages the faithful to lift their hearts on high, while an epiclesis typically asks God to send down the Holy Spirit or pleads

⁶⁹ *Book of Common Worship*, 412.
⁷⁰ John Calvin, *The Form of Church Prayers*. English text from *Liturgies of the Western Church*, ed. Bard Thompson, 3rd ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 207.

for the Spirit to come. Third, this *sursum corda* contains not only a positive exhortation and movement *to*, but also a negative exhortation and movement *away from*, namely away from “earthly and corruptible elements.”⁷¹ Given that the *sursum corda* follows the all-important words of institution, its function strikes me as akin to that of a liturgical emergency brake: after the congregation has focused so clearly on the elements of bread and wine -- through Christ’s own, biblical words -- the Reformed *sursum corda* is introduced to force the attention elsewhere, as far away from the table and the elements as possible, namely “on high... even to heaven.” Finally, with its exhortation to the congregation to *do* something at this crucial liturgical moment, just before communion, the *sursum corda* can easily be misread as a call to action, and thus to human works. The congregants, after all, are called upon to do the lifting (I find this striking in a Reformed liturgy). One could just as easily have phrased the same thought as a prayer, asking God to “lift our hearts on high by the power of your Holy Spirit...”.

Be that as it may, *theologically* one will have to envision the Holy Spirit as the Divine Enabler behind the Reformed *sursum corda*. How on earth could human beings otherwise lift up their hearts on high where Jesus Christ is? And indeed, some later sixteenth-century texts make this truth more explicit. The 1560 Scottish Confession, for example, insists:

⁷¹ Farel described them as “visible signs which are corrupted through usage” in his own text of the *sursum corda*, see *Liturgies of the Western Church*, 223.

this union and conjunction which we have with the body and blood of Christ Jesus in the right use of the sacraments *is wrought by means of the Holy Ghost, who by true faith carries us above all things that are visible, carnal, and earthly*, and makes us feed upon the body and blood of Christ Jesus, once broken and shed for us but now in heaven, ... for the Holy Spirit, who can never be separated from the right institution of the Lord Jesus, will not deprive the faithful of the fruit of that mystical action.⁷²

And in the Palatinate Liturgy of 1563, the *sursum corda* explicitly makes reference to the work of the Holy Spirit:

let us not cleave with our hearts to this external bread and wine, but lift up our hearts and faith into heaven, where Christ Jesus is our Intercessor at the right hand of His heavenly Father (where the articles of our Christian faith also direct us) and doubt not that through the action of the Holy Spirit, our souls shall be fed and nourished with His body and blood, as truly as we receive the holy bread and cup in remembrance of Him.⁷³

The Palatinate Liturgy of 1563 is a good point from which to move on to the fourth and last site I have chosen at which to catch glimpses of the Holy Spirit in the Reformed liturgical tradition. For this site, we have to fast-forward three hundred years and move to the other side of the Atlantic, to an inheritor of the 1563 Palatinate Liturgy, namely the German Reformed Church in America.

4. Glimpses of the Spirit in the *Provisional Liturgy (1857)* of the German Reformed Church in America

⁷² The Scots Confession, available at <http://www.creeds.net/reformed/Scots/>, Art. 21. Last accessed April 11, 2013.

⁷³ For the English text of the Palatinate Liturgy, see *The Living Theological Heritage of the United Church of Christ*, vol. 2: *Reformation Roots*, ed. John B. Payne (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 1997), 359-376, here 371.

A few introductory remarks are in order before I turn to glimpses of the Spirit in the 1857 *Provisional Liturgy*.⁷⁴ This order of worship sought to provide an English-language, scripted liturgy for use of the German Reformed congregations in America. Mercersburg theologians played a prominent role in the preparation of this order of worship, which noticeably drew not only on Reformed -- and even Reformation -- texts but also on broader liturgical elements, from early Christian and Eastern sources to contemporaneous ones. The most important contemporaneous source was the liturgy of the Catholic Apostolic Church, an ecclesial community in England that blended Scottish Presbyterian roots and charismatic practices with an ever-increasing penchant for both high ceremonial and eclectic ritual borrowing.⁷⁵ Philip Schaff experienced the worship of the Catholic Apostolic Church while in England in 1853 and described the Sunday morning Eucharist as "the most beautiful and perfect

⁷⁴ The term is invoked in the "Advertisement" of the printed edition; see *A Liturgy: OR, Order of Christian Worship, Prepared and Published by the Direction and for the Use of The German Reformed Church in the United States of America* (Philadelphia: Lindsay & Blakiston, 1858), iii.

⁷⁵ See Kenneth W. Stevenson, "The Catholic Apostolic Church -- Its History and Its Eucharist," *Studia Liturgica* 13 (1979): 21-45; Greg Alan Mast, *The Eucharistic Service of the Catholic Apostolic Church and Its Influence on Reformed Liturgical Renewals of the Nineteenth Century*, Drew Studies in Liturgy Series 7 (Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, 1999).

liturgical service I have yet attended."⁷⁶ Back in the States, he used the Catholic Apostolic Church's printed liturgy as he chaired the committee tasked with drafting an order of worship for the German Reformed Church.⁷⁷ Not surprisingly, the 1857 *Provisional Liturgy* evolved as a multiply blended text. Above all, it blends the -- already blended -- liturgical texts of the Catholic Apostolic Church with features of the old Palatinate liturgy, the *Book of Common Prayer*, and some original compositions. A draft for a "Communion Service" in Schaff's handwriting, for example, labels the text as "partly compiled, partly original."⁷⁸ Remarkable is especially that the *Provisional Liturgy* opted against Reformed precedent and for a full-fledged eucharistic prayer.

Where, then, do we catch glimpses of the Holy Spirit in this *Provisional Liturgy*? Focusing on the eucharistic liturgy alone, five moments are worth highlighting.

⁷⁶ Philip Schaff in a letter to his wife, as quoted in Scott Francis Brenner, "Philip Schaff the Liturgist," *Christendom* 11 (1946): 443-456, here 448.

⁷⁷ I agree with Mast on this point; see Mast, *The Eucharistic Service of the Catholic Apostolic Church*, 68. Three issues, however, remain unclear: First, precisely which edition of the Catholic Apostolic Church liturgy did Schaff use, the 3rd edition of 1851 or the following edition of 1853? Second, in his encounter with the Catholic Apostolic Church's worship, Schaff will have witnessed charismatic practices, which were un-scripted, however; what does it mean that he drew on the group's scripted work only? Finally, in what seem to be his own compositions in the draft, Schaff exhibits strong poetic sensibilities gifts in the English language, although he had only come to the U.S. a decade earlier and had initially lectured in German. Is it plausible that he mastered the poetics of English so quickly?

⁷⁸ Schaff's initial draft of the eucharistic prayer, without intercessions, was published by Brenner in "Philip Schaff the Liturgist," 450-451.

First, the service of Holy Communion opens with a Trinitarian formula – “In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” – followed by a version of the *Book of Common Prayer*’s Collect for Purity, as this had been reworked in the Catholic Apostolic Church’s rite. In the *Provisional Liturgy*, the prayer asks God to “cleanse our minds ... by the inspiration of Thy Holy Spirit, that we, Thy redeemed people... may offer unto Thee an acceptable sacrifice.”⁷⁹ I note in passing that the Collect for Purity, often invoked as a gem of the Anglican liturgical tradition, is in fact a (minor) reworking of an early-medieval collect from a Votive Mass to the Holy Spirit.⁸⁰ Whether they knew it or not, the compilers of the *Provisional Liturgy* here drew on an important witness to the Holy Spirit from within the Roman Catholic tradition.

We catch a second glimpse of the Spirit in the Exhortation that precedes the Confession of Sin and Assurance of Pardon. Such an Exhortation is a common feature in sixteenth-century Reformation liturgies, yet in the *Provisional Liturgy*, this Reformed vessel carries a distinctly Mercersburgian theology. The lengthy text, which appears to be an original composition of Philip Schaff’s, contains a succinct eucharistic theology with a hint of the Spirit’s role:

Our Blessed Saviour Jesus Christ,

⁷⁹ I quote from the text of the *Provisional Liturgy* published as Appendix V in Jack Martin Maxwell, *Worship and Reformed Theology: The Liturgical Lessons of Mercersburg*, Pittsburgh Theological Monograph Series 10 (Pittsburgh, PA: Pickwick Press, 1976), 439-455, here 440.

⁸⁰ Text in *Patrologia Latina* 101:446: *Missa de gratia Sancti Spiritus postulanda*.

when he was about to finish the work of our redemption by making Himself a sacrifice for our sins upon the cross, solemnly instituted the Holy Sacrament of His own Body and Blood, that it might be... the abiding memorial of his gracious death; the seal of his perpetual presence in the church by the Holy Ghost; the mystical exhibition of his one offering of Himself made once; ... and the bond of his living union and fellowship with them to the end of time.⁸¹

A third, fleeting glimpse of the Holy Spirit appears in the *Provisional Liturgy* when the congregation is called upon to examine itself and confess its sins in preparation for communion. The text, drawn largely from the Catholic Apostolic Church’s liturgy, asks God to “forgive us all our sins [and] purify us, by the inspiration of Thy Holy Spirit.”⁸² The latter phrase echoes the opening Collect for Purity.

It is of course in the eucharistic prayer over bread and wine that the *Provisional Liturgy* offers its most intriguing glimpses of the work of the Holy Spirit. Before I come to the famed epiclesis, it is worth highlighting another feature, namely the opening of the eucharistic prayer. In an unusual move, Schaff’s draft addressed the eucharistic prayer explicitly to each person of the Holy Trinity. Schaff’s trinitarian text was quite elaborate, reading in part:

It is very meet, right and our bounden duty that we should praise Thee, sing hymns unto Thee and give thanks unto Thee, the Father everlasting, Almighty maker of heaven and earth, and unto Jesus Christ the Son of God, Redeemer of the World,

⁸¹ Text as given in Maxwell, *Worship and Reformed Theology*, 443f.

⁸² Maxwell, *Worship and Reformed Theology*, 445. Cf. Mast, *The Eucharistic Service of the Catholic Apostolic Church*, 70.

and unto the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, the spirit of truth and holiness.⁸³

In the printed *Provisional Liturgy* of 1857, the eucharistic prayer remains addressed to the Trinity but in a considerably muted form:

It is very meet, right, and our bounden duty, that we should at all times, and in all places, give thanks unto Thee, Lord God Almighty, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.⁸⁴

The most noteworthy feature of the eucharistic prayer of the *Provisional Liturgy* is of course its epiclesis, which occurs after the institution narrative.⁸⁵

This epiclesis is noteworthy for two reasons. A first reason is its very existence, since an explicit epiclesis is absent from much of the Western tradition of eucharistic praying (even if a few Reformation liturgies, not least the Palatinate Liturgy of 1563, do have a form of an epiclesis⁸⁶). Second, this epiclesis is noteworthy because of its text:

⁸³ Text as quoted in Brenner, "Philip Schaff the Liturgist," 450; the arrangement of the text into lines is mine.

⁸⁴ Maxwell, *Worship and Reformed Theology*, 446.

⁸⁵ It thus appears in a quite different place from the epicleses in the eucharistic rite of the Catholic Apostolic Church, which has two separate, identical, short epicleses, over bread and over cup, before the words of institution.

⁸⁶ The Palatinate Liturgy asks God "to act upon our hearts by thy Holy Spirit in this Supper, ... that through the power of the Holy Spirit our weary and contrite hearts may be fed." See *The Living Theological Heritage of the United Church of Christ* 2:371. For an in-depth analysis, see Friedrich Lurz, *Die Feier des Abendmahls nach der Kurpfälzischen Kirchenordnung von 1563*, *Praktische Theologie heute* 38 (Stuttgart: Verlag W. Kohlhammer, 1998), 277-289.

ALMIGHTY GOD, our heavenly Father, send down, we beseech Thee, the powerful benediction of Thy Holy Spirit upon these elements of bread and wine, that being set apart now from a common to a sacred and mystical use, they may exhibit and represent to us with true effect the Body and Blood of Thy Son, Jesus Christ; so that in the use of them we may be made, through the power of the Holy Ghost, to partake really and truly of His blessed life, whereby only we can be saved from death, and raised to immortality at the last day.⁸⁷

The text has been described as "a liturgical transcript"⁸⁸ of Mercersburg's sacramental theology. "In the briefest possible form it sets forth the essence of Mercersburg's eucharistic doctrine... Calvin's Sursum-corda dynamic has been corrected; it is through the activity of the Holy Ghost that we participate in a *mystical union* with the living, present Christ."⁸⁹ What seems to have escaped notice is the fact that Schaff's initial draft contained a quite different and much shorter epiclesis:

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, send down, we beseech Thee, Thy Holy Spirit upon us and upon these elements, which we now offer unto Thee, and so bless and sanctify them, that we

⁸⁷ Maxwell, *Worship and Reformed Theology*, 449.

⁸⁸ Christopher Dorn, *The Lord's Supper in the Reformed Church in America: Tradition in Transformation*, *American University Studies, Series VII, Vol. 264* (New York: Peter Lang, 2007), 66.

⁸⁹ Maxwell, *Worship and Reformed Theology*, 232.

Thy servants may be nourished by the sacred Body and precious Blood of Thy Christ unto life everlasting.⁹⁰

Note that this earlier draft invoked the Spirit on the gathered congregation first, then on the elements of bread and wine, while the later text opens with an invocation of the Spirit on the elements alone. What happened to the original text?

The epiclesis in the 1857 *Provisional Liturgy* represents, I think, a sustained re-working of Schaff's earlier text by John Williamson Nevin.⁹¹ My reasons are as follows: First, the 1857 epiclesis introduced a number of linguistic affinities with Nevin's own writings into the prayer.⁹² Second, Nevin revealed a detailed knowledge of the construction of the prayer in his 1867 *Vindication of the Revised Liturgy*; there, he carefully exegeted the 1857 epiclesis and showed where and how the text explicitly drew on Calvinist-Reformed language. Furthermore, what Nevin highlighted, were precisely the additions to Schaff's

⁹⁰ Quoted in Brenner, "Philip Schaff the Liturgist," 451.

⁹¹ Howard G. Hageman suspected that the 1857 epiclesis might be Nevin's work, but seemed unaware that Schaff's earlier draft had a quite different epiclesis that was partially incorporated into the 1857 text; see Hageman's *Pulpit and Table: Some Chapters in the History of Worship in the Reformed Churches* (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1962), 91.

⁹² E.g., an emphasis on Christ's *life* in the epiclesis, the notion of the *mystical* use to which the elements are put, and the

draft.⁹³ Lastly, given that the Reformed doctrine of the Lord's Supper had consumed much of Nevin's energy in the 1850s, it seems safe to assume that Nevin himself re-wrote Schaff's earlier draft in light of sixteenth-century Calvinist-Reformed texts. What remains distinctly non-Calvinist is the very existence of an epiclesis within a fully-fledged eucharistic prayer, and an epiclesis that takes the place of the Reformed *sursum corda* after the words of institution, no less. Never mind that Nevin deemed this epiclesis "consecratory."⁹⁴

Finally, to conclude my overview of glimpses of the Holy Spirit in the 1857 *Provisional Liturgy*, an intriguing text, a trinitarian benediction of sorts, was inserted after the Lord's Prayer and before the Peace and Communion. The minister is instructed to pray over the congregation, invoking Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Spirit is invoked thus:

understanding of the elements as *exhibiting and representing* Christ's body and blood.

⁹³ John Williamson Nevin, *Vindication of the Revised Liturgy, Historical and Theological* (1867), in *Catholic and Reformed: Selected Theological Writings of John Williamson Nevin*, ed. Charles Yrigoyen, Jr., and George H. Bricker (Pittsburgh, PA: The Pickwick Press, 1978), 313-403, here 401.

⁹⁴ Nevin, *Vindication of the Revised Liturgy*, 401.

The Holy Ghost, the Comforter, the Spirit of the Father and of the Son, come down upon you in His glory, and take up His habitation in your hearts henceforth and forever.⁹⁵

The provenance of this text shows just how hybrid and blended a composition the *Provisional Liturgy* is. Schaff here reworked a text found in the Catholic Apostolic Church's eucharistic rite. The compiler of that liturgy, John Bate Cardale, indicated that he had lifted the prayer to the Holy Spirit from Byzantine Preparatory rites, where it was said by a deacon.⁹⁶ In the *Provisional Liturgy*, the prayer is addressed to those about to receive communion in the form of a blessing – a quite independent use of this by now twice-recycled liturgical element.

In the short run, the 1857 *Provisional Liturgy*, rather than enabling richly Reformed, English-language worship in the German Reformed congregations, produced what can only be called a worship war instead. Yet looking back a hundred and fifty years later, one cannot but be struck by how this liturgical text gestured toward twentieth-century developments, including fuller eucharistic prayers; borrowing across ecclesial lines, both East and West; drawing on the breadth of the liturgical tradition; and finally, yes: recapturing an

⁹⁵ Since Maxwell's text in *Worship and Reformed Theology*, 452 is missing a line at this point, I here quote directly from *A Liturgy: OR, Order of Christian Worship*, 201.

⁹⁶ John Bate Cardale, *Readings upon the Liturgy and Other Divine Offices of The Church. Part I: On the Eucharist* (London: George Barclay, 1848), 193, 195f.

epiclesis. To put this differently, the 1857 *Provisional Liturgy* can be understood as an exercise in liturgical intertextuality and creativity, often through recycling, in which a worshipping community lays claim to an ecclesial breadth that the liturgy of one tradition alone typically does not exhibit. In that sense, the *Provisional Liturgy* predates twentieth-century performances of "catholicity."

Concluding Thoughts

I have been seeking to capture glimpses of the Holy Spirit as offered by the Reformed liturgical tradition. Although I have included a couple of contemporary sources, I have said little about actual liturgical life today. Four reasons are responsible for this. First, as a Roman Catholic I know better than to claim any particular wisdom with regard to contemporary Reformed liturgical life. Second, I am addressing a roomful of people whose professional labor in one way or another involves precisely such wisdom. Moreover, I am keenly aware that the Reformed tradition is "delightfully confusing" (Howard Hageman) and hard to generalize. Lastly and maybe most importantly, I do not believe that any quick fixes are available for the issues that confront worshipping communities today.⁹⁷

Permit me, then, in closing simply to offer a couple of observations. I begin by drawing on Nick Wolterstorff's essay on "The Reformed Liturgy" in *Major Themes in the Reformed Tradition*. Wolterstorff in 1992 described and

⁹⁷ In part, our worship life struggles simply because of broader cultural trends – e.g., the contemporary suspicion of organized religion, established

celebrated the “emerging liturgical coalescence” among mainline Christian communities which he regarded as “nothing less than the work of the Spirit.”⁹⁸ More than twenty years later, we find ourselves on the other side of the mountain climbed by ecumenical-liturgical pioneers in the twentieth century. From that vantage point, more mountains have become visible, rising out of liturgical tensions within and across, rather than between, ecclesial traditions. These tensions can be rooted in contrasting worship styles, in diverse ethnic and racial heritages that demand attention, in differing and contrasting commitments to gender justice or to earth-care, and in the manifold fusions and tensions that mark contemporary worship life. Finally, human lives and patterns of living have changed in quite dramatic ways since 1992, owing to new media and information technologies. At the heart of the question of worship, given all of these complex developments, is the discernment of how and where the Spirit moves today. And the key theological question of course is: whose discernment is to be trusted, and followed? I cannot decide this question *ex cathedra* for the churches in the Reformed tradition, but I draw your attention to one of your own contemporary sources. The 2010 statement “Worshiping the Triune God,” adopted by the newly formed World Communion of Reformed Churches that brought together some 80 million Reformed Christians worldwide, includes the following

hierarchies, appeals to tradition, a religious metanarrative, etc. These broader cultural trends are not something a single denomination can “fix.”⁹⁸

See Nicholas Wolterstorff, “The Reformed Liturgy,” in *Major Themes in the Reformed Tradition*, ed. Donald K. McKim (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992), 273-304, here 275f. I note in

beatitude of sorts regarding the Holy Spirit. I make its wisdom my own in concluding this essay:

Wise is the worshipping community
that recognizes how the Holy Spirit works
through both reason and emotion,
through both spiritual disciplines and surprising events,
through both services that are prayerfully planned
and through moments of spontaneous discovery.

Wise is the worshipping community that recognizes that
the lasting value or spiritual power of worship
does not depend on our own creativity,
imagination, intellect, or emotions,
but comes from the Holy Spirit,
who may choose to use any or all of these things.
For truly, worship is a gift to receive,
not an accomplishment to achieve.

passing that this major collection of essays lacks an essay dedicated explicitly to the Holy Spirit.

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