



THE NEW MERCERSBURG REVIEW

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**Re-Membered Bodies: Mystical Union with
Christ & Women's Embodied Trauma**

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SERMON

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BOOK REVIEW

Walter Ray's *Tasting Heaven On Earth: Worship in
Sixth-Century Constantinople*

Reviewed by *John Miller*

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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, and 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

One of the goals of The Mercersburg Society is to stimulate “...research and correspondence among scholars on topics of theology, liturgy, the Sacraments, and ecumenism.” One of our most effective methods for achieving these goals that has been the creation of The Roth Prize. Anne Thayer has been of great help in overseeing this process. This issue of the New Mercersburg Review includes two excellent papers that did not win the prize but were so good that we wanted to honor their authors and stimulate further correspondence on the topics they have researched.

Alexandra Mauney brings together two theological streams that are not usually discussed at the same time. The first is John Williamson Nevin’s Theology of the Eucharist and the second is recent Feminist Theology. She explores the very practical issue of women’s trauma and the Eucharistic Presence. In so doing she includes insights that vary from Bernard of Clairvaux and Donald Baillie to Susan Ross and M. Shawn Copeland. This essay, again, emphasizes that our commitment to Mercersburg Theology does not mean we are stuck in the 19th Century.

Samuel L. Young’s essay takes us in another direction. His work compares the theologies of Schaff and Schleiermacher. There are members of our society who sense that we tend to overemphasize Nevin at the expense of Schaff. These two Roth Prize submissions therefore will be greeted as being “fair & balanced” in that both get one essay.

Young summarizes his essay with this statement. “The aim of this paper is to problematize attempts to construe Schaff as a straightforward disciple of Schleiermacher. To illustrate substantial differences between the two men, this paper will examine their collective thought on the nature of Protestantism, Catholicism, and the Reformation (essential to both of their theologies), noting the ways in which Schaff distanced himself from Schleiermacher.”

We also have the pleasure of including retired Bishop Nathan Baxter's sermon for the 2019 Convocation.

We try to continue being a "Review" by including book reviews that relate to our goals. John Miller has stepped up to the plate and reviewed the book *Tasting Heaven On Earth: Worship in Sixth-Century Constantinople* by Walter Ray on Eerdmans Thank you, John.

May these articles stimulate your thoughts and your life.

Re-Membered Bodies: Mystical Union with Christ & Women's Embodied Trauma

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A Roth Prize Paper Submission

In 2014, Presbyterian scholar and professor Ronald P. Byars published a book called *Come and See*, in which he traces the processes and practices of many congregations within the Presbyterian Church (USA) who had begun celebrating the Eucharist at each Lord's Day worship service.¹ Byars seeks to explore the ways in which these congregations came to their decision to pursue weekly Eucharist, recording the processes by which these communities discerned the future of their sacramental practices.² The PC (USA), the author argues, is in the midst of great ecclesial change. To recognize that weekly celebration of Eucharist is "biblical, Reformed, faithful, and immediately relevant to new generations" is to embrace this change while remaining grounded in historic practices of the Christian Church. Byars effectively demonstrates the legitimacy of this claim throughout the book, utilizing ethnographic research to make real the processes of liturgical evolution for which he argues.

¹ Ronald P. Byars, *Come and See: Presbyterian Congregations Celebrating Weekly Communion* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2014).

² Byars, xiv.

As I engaged Byars's text several years ago, I began to wonder how a more expansive view of Reformed Eucharistic theologies might bolster his claims and lead congregations I knew to embrace the Eucharist as a practice that encourages the flourishing of all people in the presence of God and one another. Byars and other liturgical scholars had already convinced me of the merits of weekly Eucharistic celebration, but I perceived missing links between the real lived experiences of congregation members and the liturgical theologies that guide those communities. Following a years-long experience of personal healing and transformation that began for me at the Communion table, I began to wonder what it might look like to bring together the embodied experiences of Presbyterian women and the Eucharistic theologies that undergird their communities' practices. In my own experience, the Eucharist was a harbinger of profound hope for the life of my own body, which had been deeply affected by harmful embodied practices. The ambiguity of my own relationship with my body intersected significantly with the ambiguity inherent in the sacramental ritual, and it was in that space of ambiguous divine encounter that I encountered experiences of deep healing and hope. I desire this same hope for all the other women I have known in my ecclesial contexts for whom embodiment is fraught with struggle, violence, and trauma.

A question thus emerges: where do Reformed theological and liturgical heritages converge with the difficult embodied experiences of real Presbyterian women, particularly as they bring those experiences to the table of the Eucharist? These experiences are as diverse as the women themselves, encompassing such disparate experiences as intimate partner violence, infertility, eating disorders, and sexual trauma. However, the polyvocality of the Reformed sacramental traditions speaks to the polyvocality of women's ambiguous embodied experiences in ways that are surprising, mysterious, and lifegiving. By engaging historic conceptions of the Holy Spirit's presence in the sacrament, particularly as expressed by Mercersburg theologian John

Williamson Nevin, and placing it in dialogue with contemporary feminist theologians, I construct a distinctly Reformed theology of Eucharistic presence that addresses a particular set of difficult embodied experiences that many women face throughout the course of their lives. From these theologies, Presbyterian pastors and lay leaders may learn to create new liturgical patterns and practices that further invite women to the table in meaningful ways.

Two strands from within the texture of Reformed sacramental theologies emerge as particularly helpful in the task of connecting Presbyterian women's embodied traumas and the Eucharistic ritual. Each of these themes, the role of the Spirit in the sacrament and the experience of mystical union with Christ, build upon and enables the work of the other, and together they provide the basis for a Reformed sacramental theology that takes seriously the difficult embodied experiences of women. From the earliest years of the Reformed theological heritage, the role of the Holy Spirit in the Eucharist has featured prominently in sacramental theologies. Part of the early generation of reformers, Zwingli and Bucer engaged the work of constructing Eucharistic theologies by systematically rejecting the Roman Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation and the prevailing understanding of the sacrament as a sacrifice. Rather, these two argued, the sacrament is a *memorial* of a sacrifice that Christ has already accomplished for believers. Any "presence" of Christ in the sacrament – which Zwingli and Bucer did not wish to minimize! – was understood to be spiritual rather than physical, because Christ has already ascended to heaven. Zwingli in particular was very interested in questions of semiotics as they relate to the scriptural bases for sacramental traditions: how, for instance, does the verb function in Christ's statement, "This *is* my body?" The way this first generation of Reformed theologians answered this concern was to focus on the way that Christ could be spiritually present to believers in the sacrament. These theologians wished to clearly separate the inner, spiritual nourishment gained by partaking in the Eucharist from the outer, "fleshly" eating of the

bread and drinking of the wine. This inner eating is purely spiritual and is only made possible by the work of the Holy Spirit.³

It is following the work of these two early Reformers, as well as the work of Martin Luther and those who came after him, that John Calvin writes concerning Eucharist and presence. While Calvin takes up the earlier Reformers' outright rejection of Eucharistic doctrines of transubstantiation and sacrifice, he does not wish to minimize the reality of the nourishment that the Spirit helps believers to receive in the meal. Neither does he want to separate the materiality of the meal (the "sign") from its benefits for believers (the "reality" or "thing signified").⁴ Calvin was, however, far more interested in the aim of the meal itself, which is to nourish believers in "a holy banquet which recalls to our memories that Christ was made the bread on which we continually feed."⁵ In Calvin's view, God has bestowed upon these signs of bread and wine particular roles, which minister to believers through the work of the Holy Spirit.⁶ This ministry involves a deepening of the union between Christ and the believer, a union which was already established at the moment of baptism and which continues to be nurtured throughout the life of faith.⁷ In this way, the meal is an instrumental means by which Christ communes with believers in a mystical and spiritual union that is part of the lifelong process of sanctification, initiated already and to continue throughout the lifetime.⁸

³ John W. Riggs, *The Lord's Supper in the Reformed Tradition: An Essay on the Mystical True Presence* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2015), 80.

⁴ Riggs, 97.

⁵ B. A. Gerrish, *Grace and Gratitude: The Eucharistic Theology of John Calvin* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2002), 13.

⁶ Riggs, 111.

⁷ Riggs, 91.

⁸ Michael Allen, "Sacraments in the Reformed and Anglican Reformation," *The Oxford Handbook of Sacramental Theology*, ed. Hans Boersma and Matthew Levering (March 2016), accessed online.

This theme of mystical union with Christ – made possible by the work of the Spirit – is one that finds its roots in mystical theologians of the medieval era. In particular, Bernard of Clairvaux often employed sensual language from the Song of Songs to engage this metaphor with rich marital imagery.⁹ As American liturgical theologian Kimberly Bracken Long notes, this strand of medieval mysticism subtly lived on in the work of Luther and Calvin. Though Reformed theologians in later generations engaged other theological aspects of the Eucharist in ways far more prominent than this theme of mystical union, the thread of this theology did feature prominently in the theologies of early American revivalism, the sacramental emphases of which mirror the older Scottish Presbyterian practices of “sacramental seasons.”¹⁰ As Leigh Eric Schmidt has noted, the rich mystical union imagery of these Scottish rites made its way into some revival practices in the American Reformed tradition of the 18th century.¹¹ Drawing again on the language of medieval mystics to describe the Holy Spirit’s work in bringing believers into union with Christ, the sacramental theologies represented in the preaching and practices of early Reformed revivals in the United States involved allegories of sexual union with Christ through the sacramental meal.¹²

This understanding of the Holy Spirit’s role in enacting a union between Christ and believers in the Eucharist was a primary emphasis of one German-American Reformed theologian whose work greatly influenced American Reformed sacramental theologies in the nineteenth century. John Williamson Nevin’s Eucharistic work in his book *The Mystical Presence* offers a deep and expansive conception of the Spirit’s presence in the Eucharist, rooted in the Mercersburg school of theology in which he was

⁹ Kimberly Bracken Long, *The Eucharistic Theology of the American Holy Fairs* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), 21.

¹⁰ Long, 21.

¹¹ Leigh Eric Schmidt, *Holy Fairs: Scotland and the Making of American Revivalism*, second edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001).

¹² Long, 21.

implicated and which continues to animate Reformed Christologies and sacramental theologies. Nevin’s understanding of the Spirit’s work in bringing believers into union with Christ in the sacramental meal was grounded in his Christology: he argued that the mystical union of Christ’s two natures “subsists and acts in the Spirit,” and when believers are raised to new life with Christ, it is *through* the hypostatic union of his two natures.¹³ Working from this classically Alexandrian view of Christology, Nevin argued that the same Spirit that unites Christ’s two natures also unites us – our whole selves – to the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist.¹⁴ This argument about the ability of believers to be truly united with Christ’s mystical presence in the sacrament angered theologians who held to a more Antiochene view of Christology, and the controversy that ensued (particularly between Nevin and the Princeton theologian Charles Hodge) animated Reformed theological circles for some time.

For Nevin, the meal is not merely a memorial of a past sacrifice, nor is the presence of Christ only symbolic. Rather, it is a uniting of the self with Christ in the sacramental meal, through the real nourishment of the whole person, body and soul.¹⁵ In *The Mystical Presence*, Nevin argues that the union that the Spirit enacts in the sacramental meal is one in which the whole self receives spiritual transformation from Christ.¹⁶ This transformative union involves a fundamental change in our very being, as the Spirit enjoins us to the crucified and risen Christ. We become united with Christ in every part of our lives, transformed through the sacramental ritual in profound moments of union that foreshadow

¹³ John Williamson Nevin, *The Mystical Presence: A Vindication of the Reformed or Calvinistic Doctrine of the Holy Eucharist* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2000), 212.

¹⁴ Nevin, 174.

¹⁵ E. Brooks Holifield, “Sacramental Theology in America: Seventeenth-Nineteenth Centuries,” *The Oxford Handbook of Sacramental Theology*, ed. Hans Boersma and Matthew Levering (March 2016), accessed online.

¹⁶ Nevin, 174.

our own full union with God in our resurrection.¹⁷ This concept of mystical union serves as a profound source of theological and sacramental grounding for the work of connecting Reformed understandings of Eucharist with real women's experiences today.

In beginning to make connections between this vibrant thread of Reformed theology and the lived experiences of women in Presbyterian congregation, we turn first to a sacramental theology of materiality, broadly conceived. The seeds of this kind of sacramental theology are present in the work of John Calvin, who argues that the material world reveals aspects of God's self to humanity. He writes, "...wherever you cast your eyes, there is no spot in the universe wherein you cannot discern at least some sparks of [God's] glory."¹⁸ For Calvin, the world around us helps us to know God's glory, and the ministries of Eucharistic bread and wine serve to unite us with Christ. Taken together, these convictions establish a sense in which God's glory throughout the natural world – materiality and all! – are revelatory. 20th century Scottish Reformed theologian Donald Baillie¹⁹ builds upon this conceptual foundation to argue that through the power of the Spirit, creation reveals itself to be a "sacramental universe."²⁰ Although a Reformed theology of sacramental presence will be clear in its distinction that the material elements not be too closely associated with Christ's presence in the sacrament, the work of Reformed theologians like Calvin and Baillie lead us to a theology in which God's self-revelation is understood to occur within the fully material elements of bread and wine or juice. In this way, the sacramentality of the material world – that is, its inherent quality that offers God's self-revelation – is manifested in the material

¹⁷ Nevin, 165-66.

¹⁸ John Calvin, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, edited by John T. McNeill (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1960), I.V.1, 52.

¹⁹ Donald M. Baillie, *The Theology of the Sacraments* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1957).

²⁰ Riggs, 137.

elements.²¹ Sacraments thus become glimpses of the already-existent reality of God’s revelation of grace within the materiality of the created order.²²

The writing of feminist theologians Susan Ross and M. Shawn Copeland are helpful in further expanding this theme, broadening conceptions of God’s self-revelation in the world to encompass even our experiences within our own embodied existence as humans. Ross writes of what she terms the “sacramental principle” in order to describe the inherent sacramentality of the world God created. All of creation, she posits, has the potential to reveal the divine, and when this revelation is linked to the event of Jesus Christ and mediated through the Church, it becomes sacramental in nature.²³ M. Shawn Copeland helps to expand the scope of this claim in her book *Enfleshing Freedom*, in which she writes that the body itself is a site of divine revelation. That is, within the material experiences of our very bodies, the divine is revealed. For Copeland, the body is a “human sacrament,” a site of divine revelation.²⁴ Taken within the context of the Reformed sacramental theologies explored earlier, we might assert that just as we catch glimpses of God’s glory and grace in the beauty of creation, so we also catch glimpses of God’s self-

²¹ Of course, for Calvin, the reality of sin in the world obscures our ability to behold God’s glory clearly; the same must be noted regarding a sacramental theology in which God’s self-revelation occurs in the material elements of Eucharist. This self-revelation is always mediated through the sinful nature of fallen humanity.

²² It is important to note that this claim about the sacramentality of the material world is *not* reflected in the work of all Reformed theologians, particularly in the work of Karl Barth. See, for instance: Martha Moore-Keish, “Barth’s View of the Lord’s Supper” in *Wiley Blackwell Companion to Karl Barth*, ed. George Hunsinger (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., forthcoming in 2019).

²³ Susan A. Ross, *Extravagant Affections: A Feminist Sacramental Theology* (New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group, Inc., 2001), 34.

²⁴ M. Shawn Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom: Body, Race, and Being* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 7.

revelation in the embodied experiences of our lives. For women in particular, this proposal is profoundly liberatory: our bodies possess the inherent quality of materiality that allows God's self-revelation, through the power of the Holy Spirit. Far from simply being sites of fleshly sin, shame, and embodied trauma, our own bodies reveal something of God's glory and grace, imbuing our embodied realities with sacramentality.

Susan Ross emphasizes a further element of creation's sacramentality, though, that provides greater nuance to such a discussion: she writes that although the world reveals the divine, the world also conceals the divine in many ways. There is an ambiguity inherent in both the natural world and the social order, revealed in processes of constant change and development over time.²⁵ Just as the social systems in which women are implicated change and evolve over time, sometimes in rapid and inexplicable ways, so do the processes of nature. This ambiguity provides space for continual discernment of the interconnectedness of God's sacramental revelation through the created order and the social world of women. In this space of discernment, the experiences of Presbyterian women in an ever-changing world come alive with meaning as their ambiguities and complexities are met by the ambiguities and complexities of a sacramental world order. Feminist theologian Kristine A. Culp gives similar voice to this reality of embodied life, writing that human existence is marked both by vulnerability and glory.²⁶ It is often in the experiences of pain and struggle that come to us as a result of our own embodied vulnerability that God's glory and grace are also present to us. In this way, the vulnerability and ambiguity of material existence intersects with the experience of being united with Christ in the material elements of wine and bread. Indeed, this was my own experience during my college years with an eating disorder, as I ate the dense bread of the Eucharist and was confronted each week with my own body's lack of substantial

²⁵ Ross, 71.

²⁶ Kristine A. Culp, *Vulnerability and Glory: A Theological Account* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010), 2.

nourishment. This ambiguous experience of feeding – at times profoundly uncomfortable, and at times deeply joyful – provided the seeds of my own connection between the sacrament and my body, in all its fleshy materiality.

It is crucial to note that from a Reformed theological perspective, these connections between embodied experience and the sacrament only exist as a result of the Holy Spirit's work in creation. Calvin and Zwingli emphasized the role of the Holy Spirit in sacramental efficacy, a view affirmed in early Reformed confessional documents, and Nevin lifted up the Spirit's work of initiating and enacting the mystical union that occurs in the sacrament between believers and Jesus Christ. This significance placed upon the Spirit's role in what happens in the celebration of the sacrament has remained a distinctive of some Reformed Eucharistic theologies, even as the theologies sometimes fail to adequately inform liturgical practices. When we consider the possibilities of profound connections between the materiality of women's embodied experiences and the materiality of the sacramental ritual, we may discover even greater depths of significance in the affirmation that these connections grow from a powerful Eucharistic theology in which the Spirit serves as a primary actor. This theological conviction provides an entry point into the world of women's experiences that we bring to the Eucharistic table. Understanding that the material world – including the particular embodied experiences of Reformed women – is imbued with sacramentality, a Reformed theology of the Spirit will further affirm the world of possibilities that exist in the space between these two material realms. If a Reformed pneumatology affirms the primacy of the Holy Spirit's role in sacramental ritual, then such an understanding also allows for significant exploration of the particular modes in which the Spirit leads women to encounter the Eucharistic ritual. With a more explicit emphasis upon the Spirit's role in sacramental encounter, women are invited into the ritual space with a spirit of openness regarding what new experiences of God's grace and glory they might discover there in the midst of their vulnerable embodiment.

Contemporary American theologian Shelly Rambo provides a conception of the Holy Spirit as an occupier of the “middle space” between life and death, which tracks closely with Ross’s emphasis on the ambiguous nature of sacramental encounter. In her book *Spirit and Trauma: A Theology of Remaining*, Rambo argues that the Holy Spirit dwells in a “Holy Saturday” space, a space between the central moments in the Christian metanarrative of Christ’s death and resurrection.²⁷ The Spirit’s work in the middle of life and death, both in the life of Christ and in the real experiences of believers, pushes beyond linear conceptions of time and resists many of our conceptions of temporality.²⁸ This concept of Spirit as occupier of middle space allows room for Presbyterian women to view their own ambiguous embodied experiences in light of the narrative of Christ’s death and resurrection, which Rambo describes as a narrative of trauma in and of itself. Writing that the trauma of Christ’s violent crucifixion remains, even following the resurrection event, she argues that we should address questions of redemption and salvation from the middle, recognizing that following the crucifixion (as with any traumatic event), “there is no clean break from the past, of death behind and life ahead.”²⁹

This is especially illuminating within the framework of the Eucharistic ritual, the central biblical narrative of which tends to be the event of Christ’s death. The memorialization of the events of the Last Supper through the continued use of the Words of Institution in Presbyterian rituals often lift the crucifixion narrative above others, even as Reformed theologies have historically sought to move away from the traditional Catholic and pre-Reformation emphasis on Eucharist as sacrifice. While Presbyterian Eucharistic liturgies have historically tended to focus less on the event of the resurrection, recent trends in liturgical renewal have sought to expand the set of

²⁷ Shelly Rambo, *Spirit and Trauma: A Theology of Remaining* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010), 32, 40.

²⁸ Rambo, 127.

²⁹ Rambo, 156.

narratives associated with the sacrament.³⁰ In keeping with this trend and with the historical Reformed focus on the events of Christ's final days in the Eucharistic ritual, the ritual may be deepened significantly by intentionally holding together the events of death and resurrection as a site of the Holy Spirit's presence and work. At this site of the "middle space" between Christ's life and death, the "middle space" of women's experiences is brought to light as a place of encounter with the crucified and risen Christ. The door is thus opened for a mystical union with Christ that holds space for difficult and ambiguous embodied experiences that women carry with them to the table.

Understanding that these embodied experiences are vast and may encompass nearly every area of a woman's embodied life, I will simply address one particular issue of women's embodiment as an example for how congregations' leaders might begin to make connections between their Eucharistic practices and the lives of their female congregants. The experiences of intimate partner violence and sexual trauma, which overlap significantly but are not identical, are lamentably common for women across demographic spectra. One would be hard-pressed to encounter a congregation without a number of women who have experienced either sexual trauma³¹ or violence within the context of an intimate relationship.³²

³⁰ *Book of Common Worship* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2018). See, for example, Great Thanksgiving prayers 4, 5, 9, 13, and 14 in the PC(USA) *Book of Common Worship*.

³¹ "Reporting on Sexual Violence," joint publication of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the National Sexual Violence Resource Center, accessed online 25 January 2019. https://vetoviolence.cdc.gov/sites/all/themes/veto_bootstrap/assets/sv-landing/SV_Media_Guide_508c.pdf. This publication cites a statistic that one in three women have experienced sexual violence victimization at some point in their lives.

³² Liz Kramer and Laura Finley, "Domestic Violence: An Overview" in *Salem Press Encyclopedia: Research Starters* (Lakeside Publishing Group, LLC: 2018), accessed online. This publication cites a statistic that 31% of women have experienced intimate partner violence at some point in their lives.

As Presbyterian women bear in their bodies their own stories of intimate partner violence and sexual abuse, the voices and practices of the Reformed Eucharistic traditions must emerge with something meaningful to say when these women approach the Eucharistic table. It is not always enough simply to proclaim that members of the gathered assembly are wholly loved by God in ways that surpass the love we experience from others, though such a message is crucial. Reformed theologies have more to say regarding the depth and breadth of God’s love for each person – including the histories we carry in our bodies.

A starting place for such a message may be found in the Reformed histories related to our mystical union with Christ in the Eucharist. The theme of mystical union grants to us a new lens of encounter with Christ in the middle space of our experiences in our bodies and at table. Particularly rich within this context are the marital images utilized by medieval theologians like Bernard of Clairvaux, and further expanded upon by Reformed theologians: the union women experience with Christ in the sacrament is akin to the union women experience in their own bodies with their intimate partners. It is important to stress, however, that this mystical union is one of wholeness and mutuality.³³ Where the beauty and unity of relational bonds are broken in the face of intimate partner violence and coercive sexual contact, those same bonds remain intact within

³³ Leanne Van Dyk, “Gifts of God for the People of God: Christian Feminism and Sacramental Theology,” in *Feminist and Womanist Essays in Reformed Dogmatics*, edited by Amy Plantinga Pauw and Serene Jones (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 216. Van Dyk helpfully notes that “union with Christ” language in the Eucharist has the potential to encourage women’s self-abdication in the context of relationship. Just as “cultural messages to [women and girls] continue to advance passivity, weakness, silence, deference, and dependence,” so can the language of union with Christ be viewed through the lens of an absorption of the self into the person of Christ. Van Dyk offers helpful ways to reframe the language of union in light of such concerns, arguing that a Womanist emphasis on the solidarity of Christ with the suffering of black women may help us to renegotiate this tension between union and self-abdication.

the realm of our intimate encounter with Christ in the Eucharist. Following in the Eucharist convictions of Calvin, we might lift up the unique wholeness and beauty of the mystical union that women receive as a result of the particular ministries of the bread and wine at table.³⁴ This union is one in which our own embodied histories of abuse and violence are brought to light in the brightness of our perfect unions with Christ. This illumination occurs within our ambiguous spaces of encounter at table, reminding us of our relationship to the one whose resurrected body bears wounds and yet whose union with us is peaceful, perfect, and whole.

In terms of Eucharistic practice, language of mystical union might be used explicitly in a number of ways throughout the sacramental ritual. Because this union occurs in the same space in which the Spirit moves and works, such language is particularly appropriate in the prayer of epiclesis. In praying a prayer of consecration over the gathered assembly and the material elements, a pastor might evoke language of peaceful union and wholeness, inviting the congregation to envision a world in which all intimate relationships are marked by the characteristics of such a union. This language of mystical union might also be evoked in the minister's invitation to the table, with words of welcome that invite women to enter into a space in which the threat of violence and abuse is always absent. In this way, as women are met by Christ in that ambiguous middle space of the Spirit's encounter, they are united with the presence of a God who takes on wounded flesh and offers it to us.

Regarding the Scriptural resonances in Eucharistic liturgies, a table practice that takes seriously the experiences of women with intimate partner violence and sexual abuse might lean heavily on the post-resurrection narratives of Christ. The risen Christ, as one who has experienced the profound trauma of betrayal, rises to new life with those wounds still marking his risen body. Taking seriously this reality, American feminist theologian Serene Jones writes that

³⁴ Calvin, *Institutes*, 1376.

the Road to Emmaus story in Luke's gospel (Lk. 24:13-35) is paradigmatic of women's experiences of trauma and survival.³⁵ The disciples, in the midst of a journey, encounter the risen Christ but are so affected by the trauma of his death that they fail to recognize him. Then, in Christ's breaking of the bread, the disciples' imaginations awaken as they experience his presence and are united with him within their very bodies: "Were not our hearts burning within us...?" (Lk. 24:32). The inclusion of this story somewhere in the Eucharistic liturgy, framed by some words of explanation around the disciples' experience of trauma and survival, can open up a new space of mystical encounter for women who have experienced violence to their bodies. The wounded Christ appears to survivors of trauma just as he appeared to the disciples, and women of the gathered assembly are invited to take part in a banquet feast in which their eyes – and, by extension, their bodies – may be opened anew.

Understanding the potential for transformation to occur in the sacred middle spaces of holy encounter at Table, Presbyterian pastors and lay leaders have a responsibility to attend carefully to the embodied experiences of women as they construct Eucharistic liturgies and practices. Just as I have come to know in my own experience of my body, the hope and healing that can come from our encounters of union with Christ in the sacrament are deeply formative. In the midst of the gathered assembly, Presbyterian women may be invited to rituals of divine encounter that take seriously the ambiguous embodied experiences that we carry within ourselves to worship each Lord's Day. By engaging historic Reformed theologies of Spirit and mystical union, leaders open the door for such encounter, leaving space for the delicate dance of body and Spirit in the middle spaces of ritual and life.

³⁵ Serene Jones, *Trauma and Grace: Theology in a Ruptured World* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 38-42.

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Out of the Shadow & into the Light: Reconsidering Schaff & Schleiermacher on the Meaning of the Reformation

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Introduction

The biographical and intellectual similarities between Philip Schaff and Friedrich Schleiermacher are striking. Both men came of age in related German pietistic communities: Schaff in Württemberg, Schleiermacher at Herrnhut. Both of them grounded their theologies on a historical consciousness that understood the person of Jesus Christ as the crux of human history. Both had a wide range of academic interests, delving into theology, biblical studies, history, philosophy, and philology. Outside of the classroom, both men felt called to serve the Church in preaching, and both were involved in various liturgical reforms for their denominations. Both helped edit and publish definitive collections of German hymnography. Both were accused of being Catholics and pantheists by their critics. Schaff himself spoke well of Schleiermacher, designating him “the German Plato” and crediting him with overthrowing the “iron embrace” of rationalism, restoring Christians to “the threshold of the holiest of all.”³⁶

³⁶ Philip Schaff, “General Introduction to the Apostolic Church,” in *Reformed and Catholic: Selected Historical and Theological Writings of Philip Schaff*, ed. Charles Yrigoyen, Jr. and George H. Bricker (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 1979), 258, 270.

These similarities between the two men, as well as Schaff's praise, have led scholars to assert a compatibility and concord in their theologies. Most recently, an essay by George Shriver has endeavored to show how Philip Schaff, in all stages of his academic career, was an American "Bridge-Builder in the extended shadow of Friedrich Schleiermacher."³⁷ Noting the similarities above, Shriver construes apparent differences between the two men as mere divergences in "specifics." Schaff's scholarship, teaching, and theology, he argues, agreed with the "spirit and ideas" of Schleiermacher.³⁸ Shriver traces the entirety of German theological thought reflected in Schaff back to Schleiermacher, the work of other German theologians being mere conduits for the father of modern theology.³⁹ By drawing connections between Schaff's thought and the theology of Schleiermacher, Shriver's article reflects much of the recent scholarship that emphasizes the influence of German theology on the professors of the German Reformed seminary at Mercersburg.⁴⁰

The aim of this paper is to problematize attempts to construe Schaff as a straightforward disciple of Schleiermacher. To illustrate substantial differences between the two men, this paper will examine their collective thought on the nature of Protestantism,

³⁷ George H. Shriver, "Pietism, Historical Developmentalism, and Ecumenicity: Philip Schaff as a Bridge-Builder in the Extended Shadow of Friedrich Schleiermacher," in *Schleiermacher's influences on American Thought and Religious Life, 1835-1920*, volume 1, ed. Jeffrey Wilcox, Terrence Tice, Catherine Kelsey (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2013).

³⁸ Shriver, "Bridge-Builder," 365.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 349-51, 365.

⁴⁰ Most recently Linden J. Debie, *Speculative Theology and Common-Sense Religion: Mercersburg and the Conservative Roots of American Religion* (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2013).

Catholicism, and the Reformation (essential to both of their theologies), noting the ways in which Schaff distanced himself from Schleiermacher in his understanding of these topics. To begin, I will examine Schleiermacher's thought on these subjects, derived mostly from his *Speeches*, *Christian Ethics*, and *Christian Faith*. I will then analyze Philip Schaff's understanding of these issues, looking specifically to his earliest publication in America, the *Principle of Protestantism*. By making such a comparison, this paper will illustrate how Schaff's thought was not a static appropriation of Schleiermacher. In certain areas, he directly challenged Schleiermacher's assertions; in others, he expanded upon them. I will then conclude with a brief consideration of Schaff's estimation of Schleiermacher, noting especially how the mediating theologians informed his reading of the father of modern theology.

Schleiermacher on the Reformation

Brian Gerrish has convincingly shown that throughout his life and writings, Schleiermacher clearly understood himself and his thought to be situated firmly in the tradition and life of the Reformation and its churches.⁴¹ How Schleiermacher understood the multifaceted nature of the Reformation undergirds all his subsequent thought on the enduring differences between Protestantism and Catholicism. Writing in his magnum opus, *Christian Faith*, Schleiermacher understood the Reformation to

⁴¹ See Gerrish's *A Prince of the Church: Schleiermacher and the Beginnings of Modern Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 21-2; and his chapter "From Calvin to Schleiermacher: The Theme and the Shape of Christian Dogmatics" in *Continuing the Reformation*, ed. Brian Gerrish (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 178-95. Whether Schleiermacher can be accurately considered a legitimate son of the Reformation and its theology was the subject of much discussion throughout Schleiermacher's life, and indeed, well into the 20th century.

hold a twofold meaning.⁴² On the one hand, the Reformation signified a conscious correction of Catholicism's errors. Schleiermacher thought that by the early sixteenth century the Church's leaders were incapable of directing the laity toward true piety, necessitating the rise of certain individuals who would prophetically call "for the church to return to itself."⁴³ Restoring the Word of God as the rule of faith over and against medieval Latin "symbolics," the reformers were able to lead the Church back to its true nature.⁴⁴ In this way, the Reformation, like all major shifts in Christian history, was predicated on disagreement over the essence of Christian faith. Protestants need not claim a divine origin for the Reformation, but need only claim that it was a mere "holding fast to the identity of divine revelation that had been altered by others."⁴⁵

⁴² Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Christian Faith*, trans. Terrence Tice, Catherine Kelsey, and Edwina Lawler; ed. Terrence Tice and Catherine Kelsey (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox, 2016), §24.1 (hereafter referenced as *CF*).

⁴³ James M. Brandt, *All Things New: Reform of Church and Society in Schleiermacher's Christian Ethics* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 94.

⁴⁴ Brian A. Gerrish, "Schleiermacher and the Reformation: A Question of Doctrinal Development," in *The Old Protestantism and the New: Essays on the Reformation Heritage*, ed. Brian Gerrish (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 186.

⁴⁵ Full quote: "The customary definition of apologetics is that it has to set forth the arguments for the divine origin of Christianity. This is both exactly the same as what I have said and, strictly according to the words, sounds different. All religious communities go back to a distinct God-consciousness and derive it in some way or other from God. Thus, to show that Christianity, in its turn, relates to the religious principle in general, as other religious communities do, is the same as saying that its divine origin is to be proven. By 'proven' people always think simply of that which contains a ground sufficient that anyone could be convinced of a truth; a conviction is thought to be mediated by others. Therein lies the inclination to make people into Christians. Such, however, does

Though the reformers were intent on a “purifying effort,” the Reformation also marked the beginning of Protestant churches as a distinct form of Christianity. Schleiermacher dismissed those who would frame their evangelical convictions as a reclaiming of the early Church’s life. Notions of Protestant communions being characterized by a “return to the apostolic age” were untenable because the development of theological language was too important to be sacrificed for the sake of a Christian primitivism.⁴⁶ Protestantism marked a forward movement for the Christian faith. From the Reformation on, Protestant and Catholic communities continued to develop under different principles; however, both are Christian at their root.⁴⁷ Though for Schleiermacher Catholicism was a different (and lesser) form of Christianity, he gave Catholicism credit by distinguishing the gravest errors of Rome

not at all lie within the provenance of apologetics; rather its purpose is to bring others to the point where they can let Christianity run its course. According to its content, then, it is not introduction to dogmatics but a discipline in its own right, belonging within the domain of church leadership. If Christianity were never attacked, apologetics could never form its own discipline.

The same state of affairs exists with the special apologetics of Protestantism; the essential relation is the same. Only we would not be able to say that the special apologetics of Protestantism has the duty to prove the divine origin of Protestantism. The Evangelical church has never claimed that the Reformation contained a special divine revelation, only that it was holding fast to the identity of divine revelation that had been altered by others. If the Evangelical church had never been under attack, the undertakings in question could not have taken the form of apologetics but these basic propositions would also have been taken into dogmatics. Here is its historical situs. The Reformation could not have developed without strife; it was thus in the same position as was Christianity in its earliest times. This is why apologetics has come into being and still exists in this form.” *BO* §39n8.

⁴⁶ *CF* §24.1.

⁴⁷ Gerrish, “Schleiermacher and the Reformation,” 187-89.

(including the papacy, a “corruption” of the “essence of the Catholic Church”) from the true nature of Catholicism itself.⁴⁸

This latter meaning of the Reformation as the creation of a new form of Christianity was reinforced in Schleiermacher’s appraisal of the contemporary legacy of the split between Catholics and Protestants. Because Catholics are Christians, Protestants should not try to convert them, but should instead leave them to their convictions.⁴⁹ It is not within the “nature” of the Protestant Church to absorb what is not hers, and even if Catholicism were to adopt all aspects of Protestant doctrine, the differing natures of the communions would preclude any sort of reunion.⁵⁰ At times, Schleiermacher contended that doctrinal distinctions between Christians communions would one day disappear as the Church continued to develop.⁵¹ In his lifetime, he believed this to be the case between the Lutheran and Reformed communions, but not for the Catholics, who were still committed to the “abuses that existed at the time of the Reformation.”⁵² The Reformation, Schleiermacher contended, “still goes on.”⁵³

⁴⁸ Friedrich Schleiermacher, *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers*, trans. John Oman (Pickerington, Ohio: Beloved Publishing, 2015), 266 (hereafter referenced as *OR*).

⁴⁹ Brandt, *All Things New*, 99-100.

⁵⁰ *CF*, §24.1.

⁵¹ *BO* §53.

⁵² Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Die christliche Sitte nach den Grundsätzen der evangelischen Kirche im Zusammenhange dargestellt*, ed. Ludwig Jonas in *Sammtliche Werke*, div. 1, vol.12 (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1843), 579, quoted in Brandt, *All Things New*, 103.

⁵³ Friedrich Schleiermacher, “Gesprach zweier selbst unberlegender evangelischer Christen Über die Schrift Luther in Bezug Auf Die Neue Preussische Agende: Ein letztes Wort ode rein erstes (1827) in *Friedrich*

Opposition to Rome, for Schleiermacher, was inherent to any Protestant theology, the Reformation necessarily informing contemporary dogmatic projects.⁵⁴ Throughout his *Christian Faith* and *Christian Ethics*, Schleiermacher contrasted his thought with the errors of Rome. Whether in a discussion of human nature,⁵⁵ the priesthood,⁵⁶ confession,⁵⁷ justification,⁵⁸ marriage,⁵⁹ worship,⁶⁰ or ecclesiology,⁶¹ the Catholic Church served as the key foil for Schleiermacher's theology. Protestant theology was unique, then, only with regard to its contrast with Catholicism; even where similarities or shared convictions appeared to exist, a difference would be found beneath the surface.⁶²

Schleiermacher sämtliche Werke, div. 1, vol. 5, 625, quoted in Gerrish, "Schleiermacher and the Reformation," 193.

⁵⁴ *CF* §§19.2, 24.3; *BO* §§212, 219.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, §61.5.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, §104.4, see also Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Christian Ethics*, partially ed. trans. James M. Brandt (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox, 2011), 149-50 (hereafter referenced as *CE*).

⁵⁷ *CF* §108.1.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, §109.1.

⁵⁹ *CE*, 112.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 158.

⁶¹ *CF* §127.1.

⁶² *Ibid.*, §§23.2-3; *BO*, §216.

Though this distinction in doctrine between Protestant and Catholic was fundamental for Schleiermacher's theological method, he was particularly vague on how the two communions differ in their natures and foundational principles.⁶³ Only in one section of *Christian Faith* did he explicitly attempt to distinguish between the two instantiations of Christianity, and only a few lines scattered through the rest of his works speak to this issue. Catholicism, for Schleiermacher, was marked by an intransigence to development and a susceptibility to the magical and superstitious.⁶⁴ Indeed, he believed that Catholics seemed to expect the miraculous and spiritual at any moment.⁶⁵ Most explicitly foundational, however, was how Catholics grounded Christ's "efficacious action" as Redeemer to the institution of the Church, making one's "relationship to Christ dependent on that person's relationship to the Church."⁶⁶ This understanding effectively transfers the role of Christ as redeemer to the Church.⁶⁷

In his *Christian Ethics*, Schleiermacher attributed the weaknesses of Catholic ecclesiology to an overemphasis on continuity with the "priestly" religion of Judaism. Jewish piety depended on a stark distinction between clerics and laity, a dynamic that Schleiermacher understood to have disappeared under Christ and the apostles. Though "completely foreign to the original constitution of the Church," Catholicism had reverted to Judaizing

⁶³ Ibid., §§24.3, 28.2. He recommends to young theologians this process of distinguishing between the Catholic and Evangelical in the last section of his Brief Outline, see *BO* §338.

⁶⁴ *BO* §60n29, *CF* §§34.2, 103.4, 140.2.

⁶⁵ *CF* §§34.2, 103.4.

⁶⁶ *CF* §24.4.

⁶⁷ Paul Ninmo, "Mediation of Redemption in the *Glaubenslehre*," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 5, no. 2 (July 2003): 187-99.

tendencies by incorporating an “inequality” into ecclesiastical life.⁶⁸ Whereas Protestantism forms its worship in opposition to Jewish and heathen elements, Catholicism embraces them by incorporating “sensorial” and “outward” displays. In these areas, Catholicism marked a regression in the development of Christianity.⁶⁹ In contrast, Schleiermacher’s Protestantism grounds one’s relationship to the Church upon one’s relationship to Christ.⁷⁰ In opposition to the wooden rigidity of Catholicism, Protestantism is inherently dynamic, developing and taking shape throughout history.⁷¹ In its progress and development, the Protestant Church is marked by “a better understanding and a more perfect appropriation of what is founded in Christ.”⁷² For Schleiermacher, the entire project of Evangelical dogmatics required a constant reexamination in order to assess how the life and piety of the Church has changed over time.⁷³

According to Schleiermacher, Protestantism’s dynamism was due to an “eternal covenant,” established at the Reformation, between “the living Christian faith and completely free,

⁶⁸ *CE*, 149-50.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 157-58.

⁷⁰ *CF* §24.4.

⁷¹ “As a Protestant theologian, I shall let no one curtail my right of development.” Martin Cordes in “Der Brief Schleiermachers an Jacobi: Ein Beitrag zu seiner Entstehung und Überlieferung,” *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 68 (1971): 195-212. Quoted in Gerrish, *Continuing the Reformation*, 151.

⁷² Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Die Christliche Sitte*, 1, 12, 72. Quoted in Klauz Penzel, ed., *Philip Schaff: Historian and Ambassador of the Universal Church* (Merger, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 2011), xliii-xliv.

⁷³ *CF* §§27-31.

independent scientific inquiry.”⁷⁴ Protestantism is able to adapt as science brings forth a clearer understanding of the world; beliefs that were previously understood as foundational to Christian faith (like prophecy, miracles, and spiritual beings) are able to be discarded while the essential aspects of faith are retained. Schleiermacher contrasted Protestantism’s mutually beneficial relationship with science to the hostile, warlike anti-intellectualism of Catholicism, which he portrayed as a barricaded warrior, ineffectively hacking away at science with a sword.⁷⁵

One other aspect of Schleiermacher’s thought deserves mention: the binding of religious conviction with a cultural and racial milieu. In a discussion of Schleiermacher’s ecumenical impulses, Klaus Penzel remarks how Schleiermacher’s understanding of Catholicism’s place within Christendom extended along racial and cultural lines, Protestantism being the form of Christianity best suited for Germanic peoples, Catholicism for Latins.⁷⁶ Penzel attributes these comments to Schleiermacher’s romanticism that sought to see how principles are made manifest in various individuations. Missing in Penzel’s analysis are several comments by Schleiermacher in his *On Religion* that seem to view Catholicism as an existential threat to Germany and Christendom. Though not completely comfortable with full union of Reformed and Lutheran churches under the auspices of the Prussian government, Schleiermacher admitted that he would be willing to accept a united national evangelical Church in order to forge a “strong resistance...necessary against the manifold suspicious

⁷⁴ Friederich Schleiermacher, *On the Glaubenslehre: Two Letters to Dr. Lücke*, trans. James Duke and Francis Fiorenza (Chico, CA: Scholars, 1981), 64.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 60-69.

⁷⁶ Klaus Penzel, “A Chapter in the History of the Ecumenical Quest: Schiller and Schleiermacher,” *Church History* 33 (1964): 330.

endeavors of the Romish Church.”⁷⁷ For Schleiermacher, a State Protestant Church was a necessary and temporary protection from an encroaching Catholicism.⁷⁸ Indeed, the entire epilogue to *On Religion* was a tirade against those who would convert to Catholicism or blend the distinctions between Catholicism and Protestantism. Schleiermacher called the phenomenon of conversions to Catholicism “simply despicable,” accusing former Protestants of loving “idolatry.”⁷⁹ For those advocating a reunion of Catholics and Protestants, Schleiermacher prophesied that such an event would be the “destruction of Christianity.” If the two communions threatened to reunite, Germany’s “invisible power” would once more awaken “its ancient heroes and its renowned descent” and oppose such an absurdity.⁸⁰

Schleiermacher’s understanding of the natures or principles of both Protestantism and Catholicism are difficult to parse, but essential to his thought was the enduring inherent antagonism between the two communities, inaugurated in the Reformation and continuing to the current day. Philip Schaff would build upon and challenge many of Schleiermacher’s presuppositions as he sought to contextualize modern German theology in an American landscape rife with ahistoricism and sectarianism.

⁷⁷ OR, 181n50. Schleiermacher would later come to embrace the Union of Reformed and Lutheran Churches. See his

⁷⁸ Ibid., 196n57.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 265-266.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 267. The last note of *On Religion* ends with the warning that “further progress of a Papistical Catholicism in Germany on many grounds necessarily involves a return to every kind of barbarity. As the freedom of the evangelical Church will remain the surest support of every noble endeavor, it cannot lie in the way so of Providence to weaken it and, at its expense, to allow Catholicism to prevail.” Ibid., p. 268n83.

Schaff and the Reformation: The Organic Development of Protestantism

On October 25, 1844, Philip Schaff gave his introductory address to a synod of the German Reformed Church in America. The previous year, Schaff had served as a *privat-docent* at the University of Berlin, teaching a course on Schleiermacher's theology and tutoring students reading the *Christian Faith*.⁸¹ The address he gave would be published in 1845 in German as *Das Princip des Protestantismus*, and in an English translation as *The Principle of Protestantism*. Educated by the successors of both Hegel and Schleiermacher, Schaff was very confident that German thought could provide the remedy to the problems of American divinity. As his first publication in America, written so soon after he had left Schleiermacher's University of Berlin, the *Principle of Protestantism* discloses Schaff's first attempt to distil the treasures of German theology to an American audience.

Retrospective Aspect of Protestantism

Schaff, like Schleiermacher, emphasized Protestantism's shared foundation with Catholicism in his consideration of the "Retroactive Aspect" of the Protestant Reformation. The Reformation did not divorce Protestants from the earlier history of the Church, but rather encouraged Protestants to see the seeds of reform germinating within the bosom of medieval Catholicism.⁸² German life and culture, as Schaff saw it, was the seedbed from which Protestantism grew. Whereas Latin and Romanist cultures were predisposed toward a Christianity of rules and structure, it was deeply imbedded within the German nature to apprehend the heart, thought, and feeling of the Christian faith.⁸³ In a later section

⁸¹ On these experiences, see David S. Schaff, *The Life of Philip Schaff: In Part Autobiographical*, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1897), 65.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 63.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 65-67.

concerned with the fracturing communions within Protestantism, Schaff contrasted the idealism and feeling of German theology with the energetic, simple pragmatism of English-speaking Christianity.⁸⁴ Those familiar with Schleiermacher's appraisal of the European religious landscape in his *On Religion* could catch the similarities found here in Schaff.⁸⁵

With Schleiermacher, Schaff asserted that the corruptions of medieval Catholicism necessitated a reformation.⁸⁶ However, Schaff did not understand the Reformation as something inherently contradicting Catholicism, but as something that developed from within Catholicism itself. Indeed, he upheld the medieval Catholic Church—including the structure, legalism, and authoritarianism that so repulsed Schleiermacher—as the bearer of true Christianity for a thousand years. The aspects that most Protestants understood as deficiencies within the Catholic system were necessary for the taming and converting of barbarian Europe.⁸⁷ Schaff's understanding of the Protestant Reformation as the “fruit of all the better tendencies of the Catholic Church,”⁸⁸ marked a departure

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 130.

⁸⁵ *OR*, 16-20.

⁸⁶ *PoP*, 63.

⁸⁷ “*The papacy is a Christian universal monarchy erected on the popular spirit of ancient Rome. And as it is necessary that authority should go before independence, the general before the particular and single— which implies that barbarous tribes require the force of a heavy disciplinary institute, in the first instance, to bring them to a full free knowledge of themselves— no unprejudiced historian will dispute the merits of the Romish system as eminently fitted for this service.*” *Ibid.*, 62-63.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 139. In his “Theses for the Times” section that summarizes the work, Schaff summarizes this idea in Thesis 33: “33. Rather the Reformation is the greatest act of the Catholic Church itself, the full ripe fruit of all its better tendencies, particularly of the deep spiritual law conflicts of the Middle Period,

from Schleiermacher's view, and lent itself to a more positive evaluation of the Church's past.

The differing understandings of the merits of medieval Catholicism point to a larger discrepancy between the two thinkers. Throughout the *Principle of Protestantism*, Schaff compared the relationship between Catholicism and Protestantism to that of Judaism and Christianity. Just as the Jewish Law was the necessary dispensation for the people of God—laying the foundation for the new covenant in Christ—the hierarchy and order of the Catholic church was the necessary precursor to Protestant liberality. Christ is the first reformer, taking what was good in Judaism and raising it to a higher level.⁸⁹ A soft-Marcionism can be traced throughout Schleiermacher's corpus, in which he disparaged the relevance of Old Testament scriptures for the edification of Christians.⁹⁰ As was stated above, he did not hesitate to describe Catholicism in terms of a “Judaizing” tendency toward rigidity and empty ritual.⁹¹ Schaff, too, will describe the deficiencies of Catholicism as a regression toward Judaism, but he distinguished himself from Schleiermacher by giving legitimacy to pre-Reformation Catholicism.⁹² Where Schleiermacher saw only the deficiencies of the Jewish and Catholic systems, Schaff understood them as good and necessary dispensations, carrying in germ what was to come.⁹³ Thus, ending

which were as a schoolmaster towards the Protestant doctrine of justification.” Ibid., 196.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 62-63.

⁹⁰ Schleiermacher, *On the Glaubenslehre*, 66; *CF* §§27.3, 132.

⁹¹ See notes 33 and 34 above.

⁹² *PoP*, 106.

⁹³ “*the entire Catholic Church as such, so far as it might be considered the legitimate bearer of the Christian faith and life*, pressed with inward necessary impulse towards Protestantism, just as Judaism—not in its character of Pharisaism and Sadduceeism indeed, but as a divinely appointed preparatory

his section on the retrospective aspect of the Protestant Reformation, Schaff stated

*The Reformation is the legitimate offspring, the greatest act of the Catholic Church; and on this account of true catholic nature itself, in its genuine conception: whereas the Church of Rome, instead of following the divine conduct of history, has continued to stick in the old law of commandments, the garb of childhood, like the Jewish hierarchy in the time of Christ, and thus by its fixation as Romanism has parted with the character of catholicity in exchange for that of particularity.*⁹⁴

Prospective Aspect of Protestantism

Later in his work, while considering the “Prospective Aspect” of the Reformation, Schaff conceded that the comparison of the Protestant Reformation to the inception of Christianity was inherently limited. Protestantism did not mark a new religion, but an “advance or progress” in “apprehension of Christianity in the

institute, and viewed in its true historical import—rolled with steady powerful stream, in its interior legal, symbolical and prophetic principle, directly towards Christianity as the fulfillment of the law, the prototype of all its symbols, and the accomplishment of all its prophecies.” *PoP*, 73. Emphasis in original his.

In *Christian Faith* §93.2, Schleiermacher flatly rejects this view regarding Judaism: “That is, if Christ were thus squeezed into the limits of what was given at the time of his appearance, then he too, as well as all that he engendered, would have had to be comprehended base only on what was given to him historically. Thus the entirety of Christianity would have had to be comprehended based on Judaism at the state of development at which it then stood and at which a person such as Jesus could emerge from its bosom. As a result, Christianity could have been merely a new evolution of Judaism, though one saturated with foreign wisdom current at the time, and Jesus would have been merely a more or less original and revolutionary Jewish reformer of the law.”

⁹⁴ *PoP*. 75 (Italics his).

Church.”⁹⁵ No advance can be made on the essential nature of Christianity; however, the Church can grow from infancy to maturity in its “apprehension” and “appropriation” of the faith.⁹⁶ Protestantism, for Schaff and Schleiermacher alike, “is the principle of movement, of progress in the history of the Church.”⁹⁷ Schaff understood the contribution of Protestantism to be largely soteriological. Justification by faith was the material principle of Protestantism, the authority of Scripture (or how the material principle is revealed) was the formal principle.⁹⁸

In the sections on justification and Scripture, Schaff reflected Schleiermacher’s dogmatic method by contrasting Protestant views—quoting scripture and confessional documents—with those held by the Catholic Church, pulling from a variety of ecclesiastical pronouncements and Catholic theologians.⁹⁹ Like Schleiermacher, he acknowledged both a semi-Pelagianism and a stagnation to all Catholic theology in these matters.¹⁰⁰ Schaff also followed Schleiermacher in considering the idea of Reformation as a restoring of the apostolic age “jejune and narrow”, as this view disclosed an ahistorical approach similar to that of the Catholic

⁹⁵ Ibid., 76.

⁹⁶ Ibid. “In other words, all historical development in the Church, theoretical and practical, consists in *an apprehension always more and more profound of the life and doctrine of Christ and his apostles, an appropriation more full and transforming always of their distinctive spirit, both as to its contents and its form*” (Italics his).

⁹⁷ Ibid., 176.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 79, 94.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 79-116.

¹⁰⁰ *CF* §61.5.

Church.¹⁰¹ When discussing problems inherent to modern Protestantism, Schaff continued to reflect Schleiermacher's thought by putting the issues of rationalism and sectarianism in terms of "diseases" plaguing the Protestant Church.¹⁰² Just as Schleiermacher called Protestants to focus on the diseases in their midst, rather than those in the Catholic Church, Schaff likewise agreed that the "most dangerous enemy" for Protestants was not the Pope, but those within Protestant churches who would establish themselves as infallible human authorities.¹⁰³

On the distinctive nature of Protestantism, Schaff noticeably contradicted Schleiermacher in several ways. First, Schleiermacher's understanding of the relationship between supernatural and natural causes precluded him from calling the Reformation a divine work.¹⁰⁴ Schaff was more willing to ascribe a divine quality to the historical event of the Reformation, even with the imperfections and perversions found within Protestantism.¹⁰⁵ Second, Schaff pushed back on Schleiermacher's understanding of Protestantism's *inherent* opposition to the ecclesiastical structure of the Catholic Church. Anti-papalism could not be the essence of Protestantism, because Luther's key insight into justification was brought forth years "before he thought of a breach with the pope."¹⁰⁶ Third, Schaff clearly disagreed with the extent to which Schleiermacher allowed Protestantism to progress past orthodox

¹⁰¹ Theses 28-30 in PoP, 196. For a description of Catholicism's lack of historical developmentism, see *PoP*, 99.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 119-20.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 124, 140.

¹⁰⁴ *BO* §39n8, §93; *On the Glaubenslehre*, 88-89.

¹⁰⁵ Thesis 45, *Ibid.*, 198.

¹⁰⁶ *PoP*, 78.

theology. Schaff advocated a positive view of the catholic theological tradition, and understood the Nicæan trinitarianism and the Chalcedonian Christology to be essential to Protestant Christianity, never to be abandoned for the sake of progress.¹⁰⁷ Lastly, where Schleiermacher was willing to leave Catholics in isolation, Schaff saw far more potential in them as co-combatants against the “ravages” of rationalism and secularism.¹⁰⁸

Future Prospects

The two men also had very different visions concerning the current and future relationship between Catholics and Protestants. Like Schleiermacher, Schaff certainly recognized the political threat of an encroaching Catholicism, remarking on the growing number Catholics coming to the United States.¹⁰⁹ Five days before Schaff gave the address that became the *Principle of Protestantism*, one of America’s greatest minds, Orestes Brownson, had publicly and controversially converted to Catholicism.¹¹⁰ Where Schleiermacher was content to see antagonism between Protestants and Catholics endure, Schaff believed that an ultimate reunion between the divided communions was inevitable.¹¹¹ Following the interpretation of Friedrich Schelling, one of his professors at Berlin, Schaff envisioned the Church’s history as personified by three apostles: Peter (Catholicism; marked by authority and law, which gives way to papal despotism), Paul (Protestantism; marked by dynamic movement and justifying faith), and John (Evangelical Catholicism; in which “authority and freedom, law and gospel, hope and faith”

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 78-79, 109-12.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 125-26.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 186-87.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 187n95.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 188-91.

are united).¹¹² Catholicism at its worst leads to a “*stiff objectivity*,” Protestantism to a “*loose subjectivity*.”¹¹³ Both would be perfected in the Church of the future. Schaff also predicted that the Church of the future would see a unification of the German mind and heart with American energy and piety, a possibility that Schleiermacher, due to the timing of his death, could only speculate upon.¹¹⁴

¹¹² Ibid., 190.

¹¹³ Ibid., 151 (Italics his).

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 178-80. Schleiermacher commented on American Christianity in a footnote to his Fourth Speech in *On Religion*: “When I first wrote this, America seemed to me a marvellously active theatre, where everything took this shape, and where, in consequence, I thought that, more than anywhere else, our own beloved Fatherland not excepted, the freedom of the religious life and of the religious society was assured. Since then the development has confirmed the anticipation. Unions are freely made and dissolved. They divide themselves. Smaller parts separate from a greater whole, and smaller wholes draw together. Thus they seek a centre around which to form a greater unity... In such a breaking up of Christianity there might be a fear that it would gradually lose its great historical form, and its scientific stability come to be quite forgotten. But the prospect is better since science has advanced and institutions have been founded for the propagation of Christian learning. Only one thing is to be lamented—at least so it appears to us from the distance—the British spirit has so much taken the upper hand and the German keeps on receding. For those free states, therefore, such a German immigration as would establish an abiding influence, were to be wished... The following alone I would add. The difference of doctrine has always appeared to me insignificant, but there has manifestly been a difference of spirit between the two communions [Lutheran and Reformed]. Without that, such a division could not have arisen from motives otherwise so insignificant. This difference has not yet by any means quite disappeared. Now this involves one-sidedness on the part of both, and the time now appears to be come for a more vigorous effort to diminish these limitations by complete combination of differences and by friendly proximity. This could better be accomplished by union, by a life in freedom more bound and in the bonds more free. Besides, it seemed high time to provide that a recurrence of envy between the two might not render impossible the strong resistance which

Conclusion

Having reviewed the accounts of the Reformation given by both men, it is clear that Schaff's relationship to Schleiermacher is far more complex than a straight-forward reception or a difference in "specifics". While Schaff shared with Schleiermacher a belief that Protestantism represented a dynamic development of the Christian Faith, he was much more hesitant to allow historic Protestant beliefs to be discarded. In other words, Protestant dynamism had a limit for Schaff, and he represents a break from Schleiermacher's willingness to let the findings of science determine what was essential for Christianity. Supernaturalism, an appropriation of the Old Testament, and traditional understandings of the Godhead and Christ are retained in Schaff's system. Schaff's thought represented a binding of Schleiermacher's "historical consciousness" with a baptized Hegelianism that emphasized organic development.¹¹⁵ In his second major publication *What Is Church History?*, Schaff explained the historical processes of *aufheben*, which involves an abolishing, preserving, and raising up of what was before.¹¹⁶ By appropriating this Hegelian terminology, Schaff was able to put forth a more cogent and complete account of the historical development of Church and theology than in Schleiermacher.

In this regard, it becomes clear that Schaff's chief theological influence was not Schleiermacher, but the "mediating theologies" of Schleiermacher's successors: Isaak Dorner, Friedrich

is becoming necessary against the manifold suspicious endeavours of the Romish Church." *OR*, 181n50.

¹¹⁵ cf. PoP, 75-77.

¹¹⁶ Philip Schaff, "What is Church History?" in *The Development of the Church: "The Principle of Protestantism" and other Historical Writings of Phillip Schaff*, ed. David Bains and Theodore Trost (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock, 2017), 287-307.

Tholuck, August Twesten, Ernst Hengstenberg, and August Neander. These men sought to go beyond the disparities between Schleiermacher and Hegel, reason and revelation, piety and science, and emphasized an approach to Christian theology that included Schleiermacher's Christocentrism, Hegel's organicism, and the experiences of German pietism.¹¹⁷ Schaff himself felt indebted to Schleiermacher, not because he adopted all aspects of his theology, but because Schleiermacher's questions and method had opened the door for further development in the historical and theological sciences.¹¹⁸ In his later work concerning the state of German theology, Schaff would echo his previous assessment of Schleiermacher.¹¹⁹ Though he continued to recognize the theologian's contribution as "extraordinary," the result was "certainly far from being orthodox, either in the Lutheran or Reformed sense, but a wonderful creation of philosophical and theological science."¹²⁰ Schleiermacher, Schaff contended, built "a

¹¹⁷ It is difficult to put forth a suitable, all-encompassing definition of mediating theology since the movement involved a diversity of thinkers and emphases. For recent examinations of these figures see Annette Aubert, *The German Roots of Nineteenth-Century American Theology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 71-73; cf. William B. Evans, "Imputation and Impartation: The Problem of Union with Christ in Nineteenth-Century American Reformed Theology" (PhD dissertation, Vanderbilt University, 1996), 163-80. For the relationship between Schaff and his professors in the mediating school, see Klauz Penzel, *The German Education of Christian Scholar Philip Schaff: The Formative Years, 1819-1844*, (Lewistown, New York: Edwin Mellon, 2004).

¹¹⁸ Schaff, *What is Church History?*, 285.

¹¹⁹ Philip Schaff, *Germany, Its Universities, Theology, and Religion: with Sketches of Neadner, Tholuck, Olshausen, Hengstenberg, Twesten, Nitzsch, Muller, Ullmann, Rothe, Dornier, Lange, Ebrard, Wichern, and Other Distinguished German Divines of the Age* (Philadelphia: Lindsay and Blakiston, 1857).

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 154.

bridge” over the “dismal swamp of skepticism,” one that allowed the mediating theologians to bind Schleiermacher’s thought to a more thoroughly orthodox biblicalism and theology.¹²¹ Schaff’s appreciation of Schleiermacher was at least partly based upon a belief that Schleiermacher would repent of his deficiencies if he would have survived to the time of the mediating theologians: “The fact is that the peculiar heresies of Schleiermacher have been long thrown aside by his ablest disciples, and there is no doubt that he would do the same, could he lead his life over again in our own age.”¹²²

In response to the publishing of *The Principle of Protestantism*, a conservative wing of the German Reformed Church sought to formally accuse Schaff of heresy for his insistence that the Catholic Church, though in need of reform, constituted a real church. For the next few decades, various charges were brought forward regarding Schaff’s supposed “Catholicism,” and many American divines continued to take issue with the “pantheism” that lurked behind all theology of German influence.¹²³ The most significant reviewer of the work was Charles Hodge of Princeton, whose main criticism was that it was too German in complexion.¹²⁴ His review of the work was largely positive, but his review (as well as from his later writings on the Mercersburg theology) discloses Hodge’s deep suspicion of German theology. There was no

¹²¹ Ibid., 320.

¹²² Ibid., 327.

¹²³ Debie, *Speculative Theology*, 57-103. Debie’s work contains the best summary of the chilly reception of German theology in the writings of Schaff and his partner at Mercersburg, John W. Nevin.

¹²⁴ Charles Hodge, “Review of Principle of Protestantism,” in *The Development of the Church: “The Principle of Protestantism” and other Historical Writings of Phillip Schaff*, ed. David Bains and Theodore Trost (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock, 2017), 213, 221.

appreciation for the different appropriations of Schleiermacher and other German thinkers within the mediating theologies that Schaff was channeling. Schaff's critics could not help but see the worst form of Schleiermacher and German theology when they read his works.

Schaff, however, clearly understood his relationship to Schleiermacher as one of guarded admiration. He admitted that Schleiermacher's American detractors were correct to point out the theologian's departure from orthodox theology, but he also wanted them to understand the positive impact that Schleiermacher had on Christendom in giving the Church the theological tools to combat modern rationalism and sectarianism.

It seems incredible that a man who removed from the New Testament the pedestal of the Old, who numbered the miraculous conception, the resurrection and ascension of Christ and his return to judgment, among the things comparatively indifferent to saving faith, who denied the existence of the devil, and taught the final salvation of all creatures, should have been a blessing to the church and lead the rising generation to the fountains of life. And yet such is undoubtedly the fact and his lasting merit, which will hardly be denied by the most orthodox divines in Germany. But Schleiermacher can only be understood and properly appreciated in close connection with the two ages between which he stood, as the last in the generation of skeptics, and the first in the succession of believers.¹²⁵

Shriver's essay, by attempting to draw a straight line between Schaff and Schleiermacher, adopts the same simplistic view held by the Mercersburg detractors who were unable to differentiate the appropriations of German theology found in Schaff. By glossing over the mediating theologians, or by attributing their school to a mere filtering of Schleiermacher, Shriver cannot account

¹²⁵ Schaff, *Germany*, 155.

for Schaff's own self-understanding as a mediating theologian.¹²⁶ According to Schaff, Schleiermacher's glory as a theologian is not self-contained, but is only achieved after his death in the thought of his "best disciples," who, "animated by his freedom of spirit, and *for this reason not dependent on his letter*, made a still nearer approach to the Christianity of the Church and the Bible."¹²⁷ As a follower of the mediating theologians, Schaff was not bound to a strict Schleiermacherianism, but considered his own thought as a raising of Schleiermacher to a higher level.

¹²⁶ Shriver, "Bridge-Builder," 365.

¹²⁷ Ibid. Emphasis mine.

Mercersburg Theological Convocation Sermon

“Remembering Who We Are in an Unfavorable Time”

Lancaster Theological Seminary, Santee Chapel

June 3, 2019

Nathan Baxter

I want to begin by giving thanks for this honor to preach at the Mercersburg Convocation. Although a Pentecostal become an Anglican, I am eternally grateful for the faculty who introduced me to the catholic witness of Mercersburg. I think of George Bricker (who gave me my first book on theology of the Lord's Supper), John Payne and Fran Ringer; and two pastors, Harry Royer and Martha Kriebel, whose ministries taught me much about how the mysteries of the sacraments are lived out in parish life.

I believe that Mercersburg is Lancaster Seminary's living theological legacy; and that in some ways all that is being done in cultural diversity, generous reformed theological Hermeneutic which informs its curriculum and revisions, and even its ecumenical multicultural expressions in chapel.

When we talk about liturgy as living and sacramental spirituality whether pipe organ and trumpets or electric organ, guitars and percussion, the critical evaluation for exploration of new theological thoughts; and the potential for our emerging elasticity or catholicity can be found and/or grounded in the seminal theological spirit of our 19th century Mercersburg “saints”. This Year's experiment by the planning committee, to demonstrate the contemporary on the ground relevance of Mercersburg Theology is but a beginning. And I believe it is moving towards a revival that might even cause the body of old Princeton Fundamentalists, and their “saint Hodges” to roll over in their graves.

Now to the Gospel. In John 15:19 Jesus says:

"If you belonged to the world, the world would love you as its own. Because you do not belong to the world---but I have chosen you out of the world—therefore the world hates you."

As church boys in a rough and tumble inner-city neighborhood I remember my mother saying to me and my brothers as we would head out for party, football game, date or just to hang out with friends: "Don't forget who you are!" It was like a cold liturgical dismissal...like a jinx on the good time of social abandon we hoped we anticipated with our friends!!!

I remember sometimes she'd sermonized: "Out there they know who you are. Don't you forget!" "Remember your friends know you are a Christian." "Remember your daddy is a preacher."

In John 15:18, Jesus is remembered saying: "If the world hates you... [that is, loves you less than you'd prefer; disrespects your values of redemptive justice and love; experience your unwillingness to "go along to get along" as a threat] "just be aware that it hated me for these reasons before it hated you" I believe Jesus, was saying these are Gospel values, even if not popular.

Let me cut to the chase! As modern American establishment Christians (Evangelical, Reformed, Charismatic, and Catholic) I think we care too very much about being liked, popular, establishment, successful, or accepted by the world to which we are called to witness.

Today, our witness to Jesus Christ exist in a religious culture of "Popular Success" Christianity. A popular little book is Bruce Wilkinson's the "Prayer of Jabez" (1 Chronicles 4:9-10). It is one of the Biblical resources for Prosperity Gospel. Then there Joel Olsteen's more modest mantra, but just as disillusioned and individualistic understanding of the Christian life; good Christians will have economic benefit and social privilege. What he calls "the favor of God". Sometimes it seems to me like Ayn Rand revival, the "Rugged Individualist". In a very materially success-oriented culture among people who often and literally feel economically,

politically and culturally “left behind” (apologies to Tim LaHaye), this is hard Gospel to counter.

And then there is Political Apocalyptic Christianity. Political Power to change the world by “any means necessary” if it brings about the “Millennium” of Christ and his Second Coming. This is a theology of a coming time when Christians will dominate and dictate the cultural and spiritual values of the world. Certain types of believers will be given political rule of the earth. A time when adherents of “our religion” will be the reigning cultural, economic, militarily, political and moral class at prayer. So many Christians are ignoring the social and political evil values and means of political leadership assuming, “if it hastens the Second Coming it is OK to make a deal with the devil”

But this success oriented hunger is not exclusive to “other” Christians. We traditional Protestant Christians also want Aspect and Success...that is, God's favor. We want to be respected as the Mainline Christians, not “sideline Christians”. or has-been. Folks in our pews suffering a sense of waning cultural and political influence feel that evangelicals are eating our proverbial “status lunch”.

Truth is we miss that status. Those of us in mainline ecumenical Christianity see ourselves as the type of Protestantism which came and planted the seeds of democracy and the Constitution; the ideals which founded this country's moral vision and unique prosperity. We too want to “Make America Great Again” We too, want our country back!! We miss our hegemony.

Robert P. Jones, in his book *The end of White Christian America* helps us understand the nostalgia which is part of our death. He catalogs the decline of the cultural hegemony once exercised by white Anglo-Saxon Protestants. Jones says, “if 100 years ago, you were a leader in industry or government, chances are you were a white Protestant male; today no such assumptions can be drawn.”

Yes, Mainline Protestants remember when White Protestantism Christianity ruled and was good for “all”. When we were the pious liberal abolitionist and suffragettes; when we had resources to establish elite private schools and colleges . Anglo-Saxon Christianity mission was led by industrialists; the robber-barons who worshiped by weekday at the altars of capitalism and then on Sundays sat in our pews and where we beheld them as the “Noblise Obligated” as they helped us build parish halls, settlement houses, orphanages, libraries, private schools, seminaries and colleges...institutions which today no longer wish to be affiliated with the Church; and whose competitors are now sponsored by a new breed of political Evangelicals, dark money speculators, and tech companies who are either exploiter of illegal labor, underclass workers and the dignity of women....like our “robber-barons” of old.

So, it's not just Conservative and Apocalyptic Christianity wanting America Great Again (by their standards). And that reality puts us in a vulnerable tempting situation, as Jesus says to be “hated”, to be loved less, to have less cultural and political influence than Conservative and Apocalyptic Christianity . Yet we look about us and know that individualism, exclusion, exploitation and repression are not the ways or priorities of God revealed in Jesus; that xenophobia, racism, homophobia, misogyny, classicism and the like, are not a faithful vision of the dream of God.

Yet, like our Lord Jesus in the Wilderness Temptation, we too are tempted by an easier way to fruits of faithfulness. We are tempted to turn Bread to Stone to assuage our hunger for power success and popularity through being primarily popular material miracle-workers... to have enough popularity, material success, entertaining quality to our liturgy and message...to have enough ego-satisfaction to draw the world to Christ. It's easier to sell the wonders of power and success that the hard truth of the cross. The tempter words still ring temptingly, “Surely God does not mean for you to die to be a reformed and resurrected people. Can we trust even what seems like institutional death to be a new beginning, an unimaginable new life grace for the sake of the Gospel. Or, do we bow down to the evil

values of pride, greed and political/cultural dominance so we can rule the world? Yes, we are in a wilderness and the temptations are uncanny similar to those of Jesus.

But is it possible that God wants to do a new thing in us? In God's Church? "Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it?" [Isaiah 43:19 KJV]. I believe God is. But we must decid: do we really want to be resurrected? If so, must the body looks like the Pre-Resurrected body? Shall we bow down to anti-Christ values to be powerful in the world today? Sisters and brothers, we must pray and faithfully discern in order to remember who we are, and whose we are. We must do this kind of discernment understanding that being the most popular, the most materially successful is not the measure of faithfulness God desires of us. As Mom Baxter taught us Baxter boys, remember who you are. People of redemptive justice, of message of Divine love...Agape. Those who are willing to offer God and the world "God so loved" all we have and are. And even to die in order that we, the Church and the world might be born to the joy of reconciliation with God and one another.

James [1: 22-27] writing to Jewish Christians of the Diaspora: "...be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves. For if any are hearers of the word and not doers, they are like those who look at themselves[h] in a mirror...and, on going away, immediately forget what they were like. [But] Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by [values] the world." May it be so in us.

A BOOK REVIEW

*Tasting Heaven On Earth:
Worship in Sixth-Century Constantinople*

Walter D. Ray
Eerdmans Publishing

Reviewed by John Miller

This book, one in a series called “The Church At Worship: Case Studies From Christian History” fell into my lap based on the title. The series introduction sets forth an interesting viewpoint, “Whereas many historical studies of worship survey developments over time, offering readers a changing panoramic view like that offered out of an airplane window, each volume in *The Church At Worship* zooms in close to the surface, lingering over worship practices in a single time and plane and allowing readers to sense the texture of specific worship practices in unique Christian communities. To compliment books that study ‘the forest’ of liturgical history, these volumes study ‘trees in the forest’.” (vii)

I must confess my interest in the Eastern Church. I first discovered Mercersburg at the feet of George Bricker, of blessed memory. Mercersburg was/is not content to look at the worship of the Church beginning with the Reformation. Nor is it content to limit that study to the Western Church. When Mercersburg speaks of “Church”, it means the whole Church. This book opens a window into a portion of the Church that is often ignored.

The book begins by placing the worshipping community into the context of the sixth century. I applaud this work for considering worship not just from the viewpoint of the clergy, but the whole worshipping community. It is, after all, the whole community and not just the clergy that comprise the Body of Christ.

On page 3, my Mercersburg bell started ringing. “By the sixth century, the issue was not only the divinity of Christ but also

his humanity.” What some might call a fascination of Mercersburg, the question of the nature of Christ, is in fact part of the whole Church question. Noting earlier on the same page that in the sixth century, Constantinople was the capital of the whole Roman Empire, this issue of the nature of Christ should be of interest to the whole Church, and not just one isolated part.

There are many lines that almost seem “throw away” lines, which could prompt even deeper study. One of those is on page 4, “In the fifth and sixth centuries, the veneration of Mary gained prominence as a way of affirming the truth of the Incarnation.” How has Mary become not an object of the proof of the Incarnation but an instrument to manipulate God? After all, everyone knows that if you want any good Jewish boy to do something, get his mother involved!! (The wedding at Cana is a biblical example.)

In describing the liturgical action and meaning of the worship service the author again lifts up a theme that should be of interest to Mercersburg. “The Eucharist was also understood as an ascent to heaven. It was the ‘bloodless sacrifice,’ as Paul the Silentiary called it in his description of Hagia Sophia. ... By participating in this bloodless worship, the early Christians understood themselves to be participating in the angelic worship”. (p25) Here the Eastern Church addresses the Real Presence as a totally different understanding from that of the Divine Yoyo, which bounces back and forth from the right hand of God into the bread and wine. There is no question of the Real Presence, if the Church is drawn into the Presence. Is that not what Mercersburg would say, especially as we join in the Trisaggion, the Orthodox word for the Seraphic Hymn, the hymn of the angels around the throne of God?

There is a wealth of material included in this work that can serve as a springboard for further study. I can highly recommend this book to become more aware of the fact that before we give up this earthly frame we can indeed be tasting heaven on earth!

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