

## Committee on Racism and Mercersburg

1. Our Charge from the Corporate Board, as we understand, is as follows:

- To affirm the concerns of LTS students regarding the heretofore unaddressed racism perspectives of Philip Schaff and respond to the problematic aspects of the Mercersburg founders.
- To State our appreciation for the work process and formal statement of the Seminary Task Force appointed by President Lytch ;
- To share, that upon reflection, we acknowledge the rich aspect of Mercersburg Theology which are consistent with critical aspects of the theology and spirituality of the Black Church tradition(s); and which could enable a fruitful dialogue with LTS students and faculty of color and also with leadership of local Churches of color, especially Black churches.

2. Building upon the last aspect of our charge, the Committee asks the Board to consider commitment to and a strategy for programs which consider such areas as:

- Identifying the aspects of Mercersburg Theology that may be relevant to contemporary issues of racism, injustices and the gifts and mission of inclusion within the Church and Society.
- The effects of context upon the formation of leaders and the lessons of existential decisions (ie., to grow or not to grow) as revelations of experience and the Holy Spirit confront us.
- Producing scholarly, pastoral and reflective essays on and/or presentations on Black Church theology and praxis and the resources of Mercersburg Tradition'
- And intentional conversations and listening sessions with leaders of Churches of Color, especially the Black Church traditions; asking, how can we bring Mercersburg into a conversation that helps to bring transformation to our present circumstances?

Points raised in our discussion included

Mercersburg affirms that various groups (church or cultural) are complementary. Ecumenism is not agreeing on a lowest common denominator and then shaking hands, but rather ensuring that the gifts of all are recognized.

Connections between Mercersburg and Black tradition:

- 1) Both the Mercersburg tradition and the Black Church are strong on Christology.
- 2) Also, in both traditions redemption and community are crucial. One upshot of that is that we all must be held accountable in community.

3) Nevin had a real sense of the communion of saints; he even called them “ancestors,” as in African tradition.

Other aspects of discussion:

- Significance of the “mystical presence”
- theology of Redemption;
- essential nature and value of diversity in church, society and culture (and ethnicity) in Mercersburg and development of Schaff's later thinking;
- We should not be defensive, but point to unique and practical elements of Mercersburg that link to Black traditions. The Spirit does really work in the Church now and always!