

The Early Creeds (Mercersburg Theology Study)

by John Williamson Nevin
(Author),

Philip Schaff (Author), John Williams Proudfit (Author)

Editors: Charles Yrigoyen Jr., and Lee C. Barrett

Book 8 of 8: Mercersburg Theology Study

July 29, 2020

Paperback
\$34.75

This volume is a collection of essays on the early creeds by John Nevin and Philip Schaff, the two principal representatives of the Mercersburg Theology that was birthed in nineteenth-century Pennsylvania. It also contains a critical response by John Proudfit, a more traditionally scholastic Calvinist. In these essays Nevin and Schaff argued that the early creeds provide an indispensable lens through which the Bible should be interpreted and an essential bond to preserve the unity of the church through the centuries. According to these Mercersburg theologians the liturgical and confessional use of the early creeds is crucial for shaping the identity of Christians and mediating the life of Christ to believers. Nevin and Schaff's enthusiasm for the creeds was a function of their understanding of Christianity as an evolving tradition, the Christian life as growth in Christ-likeness, the church as the nurturing body of Christ, and the sacraments as conduits of Christ's vivifying personhood. These convictions stood in sharp contrast to the a-creedal sensibilities of most nineteenth-century American Protestants who emphasized the sufficiency of Scripture alone, the church as a gathered community of like-minded individuals, dramatic conversion experiences, and the direct presence of Christ to the individual soul



Wipf & Stock Publishers

Publication date

July 29, 2020

ISBN-10

1532697929

ISBN-13

978-1532697920

Review

"In these writings, John Williamson Nevin and Philip Schaff develop their conviction that the foundation of the catholic and ecumenical Christian tradition is to be found in the Apostles' Creed, which expresses the transforming presence of the triune God in the continuing incarnation of the Son of God in the church. The editors do an exemplary job of placing these texts in their theological and cultural contexts. These writings are essential for an understanding of Mercersburg theology."

--Randall C. Zachman, Professor Emeritus of Reformation Studies, University of Notre Dame

"Nevin's and Schaff's articles championing the early creeds provide a fascinating window into the entire range of their 'catholic and Reformed' theology. Best of all, their spirited debates with then-dominant American 'Puritan' 'anti-creed' Protestant views anticipate, as the editors rightly note, continuing issues in contemporary American constructive theology. Brilliantly edited, with immensely helpful historical footnotes, this volume is a gift for anyone concerned with recovering the centrality of the early creeds for Christian confession."

--David J. Gouwens, Professor Emeritus of Theology, Brite Divinity School

"In this important volume, Professors Yrigoyen and Barrett carefully introduce and annotate key writings by Nevin and Schaff. The Apostles' Creed emerges here as the hermeneutical lens through which the Mercersburg theologians read Scripture--anchored in an understanding of incarnation as the crucial work of Christ (in contrast to prevailing theories of atonement) and shaped by social practices and communal language (instead of immediate experience). Contemporary religious debates will be enhanced through engagement with these writings."

--Theodore Louis Trost, Professor of Religious Studies, University of Alabama

"Church debates are worth revisiting only if something crucial is at stake. Nevin and Schaff used a debate regarding the creeds to affirm that Christianity is about the incarnation and new life in Christ and the Spirit, in contrast to thinking that we believe as solitary individuals cut off from the community of Christ, sacraments, and tradition. That makes the book worth reading. The introductions are an added bonus."

--Peter Schmiechen, Professor of Theology and President Emeritus, Lancaster Seminary

About the Author

Authors: John Williamson Nevin (1803-1886) was an innovative and controversial American theologian. Although reared in Presbyterianism, Nevin became the premier exponent of the Mercersburg Theology

of the German Reformed Church. He promoted a view of Christianity as evolving, focused on the Incarnation, and centered in the sacraments. Philip Schaff (1819-1893) was a German emigre who taught theology and church history at Mercersburg Seminary and Union Theological Seminary, New York. In the United States he pioneered the study of the history of Christianity and was a progenitor of the ecumenical movement. John Williams Proudfit (1803-1870) was a classicist and ecclesial historian who taught at New York University and New Brunswick Seminary. His more bibliocentric Reformed theology motivated him to passionately and caustically critique Nevin's work.

Editors: Charles Yrigoyen Jr., a prominent pastor, teacher, and scholar, has written numerous books and articles on the history of Methodism and on the Mercersburg Theology. He has coedited two volumes of the highlights of the Mercersburg Theology: Catholic and Reformed: Selected Theological Writings of John Williamson Nevin, and Reformed and Catholic: Selected Theological Writings of Philip Schaff.

Lee C. Barrett is a professor of theology at Lancaster Theological Seminary. He has authored several books and articles interpreting the writings of Soren Kierkegaard and is a coeditor of the Mercersburg Theology Study Series.
