12

Philip Schaff: His Role in American Evangelical Education

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INTRODUCTION

There have been many German influences on American Christianity. Among the early settlers of America were groups such as the German and Dutch Reformed or Lutherans, Moravians, Brethren, and Roman Catholics. German "higher" criticism had significant effects on American theological studies toward the end of the century. But few people are familiar with Philip Schaff, whose life and thought spans the nineteenth century and touches both ends of the spectrum.

Philip Schaff (1819–93) is one of those marginal men whose mediating influence as a theologian touched both the evangelical and modernist camps within American Christianity. His direct and indirect influence on American evangelical education is unmistakable if one defines education, in the words of a recent historian, as "the deliberate, systematic, and sustained effort to transmit, evoke, or acquire knowledge, values, attitudes, skills, and sensibilities, as well as any learning that results from that effort, direct or indirect, intended or unintended."[1] To demonstrate Schaff's complex influence, which was conservative in nature, his background needs to be summarized before we can evaluate his role as a teacher, theologian, and church historian in its American context.

THE EMERGENCE OF PHILIP SCHAFF

Philip Schaff was born in Switzerland to a poor carpenter's family near Chur, the capital of the canton of Graubünden, on January 1, 1819. His father left the family early, and, his mother later remarried. At age sixteen he "awoke to a sense of the paramount importance of religion" and decided

1. Lawrence A. Cremin, *American Education: The Metropolitan Experience, 1876–1980* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), x.

to become a theologian in the company of Meta Heusser, a reclusive, evangelical poetess, and the Reverend Paul Kind.[2] The former gave him the early love and Christian influence he craved while also imparting to him a love for romantic poetry. The latter counseled Schaff to attend a Christian school in Kornthal, near Stuttgart, in Germany. Here Schaff had a conversion experience that transformed his life from within, while his teachers worked on him from without. Later, at the *Gymnasium* in Stuttgart, Schaff was given a classical education in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. With a powerful, grasping mind and a hunger for learning, he progressed rapidly.[3]

From 1837 to 1839, Schaff studied philosophy and theology at the University of Tübingen, guided by Christian Friedrich Schmid, Isaak A. Dorner, and other evangelical professors, who protected him from the extremes of Hegelianism and the biblical criticism of F. C. Baur and Heinrich Ewald. Schaff, however, did not fully reject the more radical thinkers of the time; he adopted some of their philosophical ideas while rejecting their theology. From 1839 to 1840, Schaff studied at the University of Halle under Friedrich A. G. Tholuck and Julius Müller, who gave him an appreciation for pietistic Christianity. From 1840 to 1844 he studied at the University of Berlin, where he came into intimate contact with Johann A. W. Neander, the famous church historian, who further molded his thought and directed his studies.[4]

Collectively, these professors influenced Schaff's reading and usage of George W. F. Hegel, Friedrich Schleiermacher, Friedrich Schelling, F. C. Baur, and Friedrich Strauss. From Hegel, Schaff borrowed the dialectic method. From Schleiermacher, he absorbed philosophical idealism and the view of an open theological development. Baur gave him an appreciation for critical analysis and thorough research. Neander, Schmid, Dorner, Schelling, and the writings of Johann G. Herder led Schaff to an evangelical, catholic, organic developmental theology and philosophy of history that focused on the incarnation of Christ.

In 1843 the German Reformed Seminary in Mercersburg, Pennsylvania, invited Schaff to teach Bible and church history. William Krummacher, the renowned Bible expositor, who had declined the same offer, ordained Schaff at Elberfeld as a missionary and charged him with the task of reforming and reviving German-American Christianity. Krummacher's sermon

2. Philip Schaff, "Autobiographical Reminiscences for my Children," 7–8, 18–23, Box: Autobiographical Miscellaneous, Philip Schaff papers, Evangelical and Reformed Historical Society, Philip Schaff Library, Lancaster Theological Seminary, Lancaster, Pa.; hereafter cited only by name, brief title, and page number.
3. Ibid., 29–30, 66, 68–73.
4. Ibid., 89–90, 94–5, 97.

upon that occasion made Schaff a modern David about to take on a new Goliath. Schaff's own sermon drew a very negative picture of the United States in general and of the state of German-American Christianity in particular. Schaff's mission became even weightier when King Frederick William IV of Prussia gave him his special backing. In traveling west, Schaff spent two months in England, which impressed him most favorably, so that he became an anglophile even after he had become content with life in the United States.[5]

On arriving in the United States in 1844, Schaff was welcomed by the Pennsylvania-German community, but German-Americans at large were outraged by the low rating he had given them in his ordination sermon. Schaff's narrow German world view quickly disappeared, however, as he observed the reality of the American situation. He found most German-Americans holding firmly to their Christian heritage. Schaff still distrusted the fanatical "red republicans" and all who proposed atheistic radical change. It appeared that just this kind of people were spreading the criticism of him in the German-American community outside of Pennsylvania.[6]

Schaff assimilated easily to American life; he ceased to distrust the new and the different and embraced an American conservatism that was itself parochial, mildly liberal on issues such as abolitionism, and always flirting with nativism or bigotry. He traded the conservative vision of German Christianity for its counterpart on the other side of the Atlantic. This made it easy for him to preach Anglo-Saxon or Anglo-Germanic togetherness.[7] Thus his conservative, middle-class outlook did not dissipate but expanded. One might say that he was as wide and free-thinking as any middle-class conservative anywhere could be. His Christianity and scholarliness made him aware of his finite, human foibles. By this consciousness, buttressed by faith and reason, he rose above his parochialisms and became transatlantic in connecting and blending cultures and trying to rise above them.

Schaff became influential in Pennsylvania-German affairs, as his intimate friendship and collaboration with the poet Henry Harbaugh evidenced. At

5. David S. Schaff, *The Life of Philip Schaff* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1897), 75–6, 82–7, 105; Philip Schaff, "Reminiscences," 103; Philip Schaff, "Ordination of Philip Schaff – Translated from Krummacher's *Palmblatter*," *Weekly Messenger* (Chambersburg, Pa., September 4, 1844): 1; Philip Schaff, "English University Life and University Reform: Oxford and Cambridge," *German Reformed Messenger* 22 (Chambersburg, Pa., April 23, 1856), 4293–4.
6. Philip Schaff, *The Principle of Protestantism*, transl. by John W. Nevin (Chambersburg, Pa.: Office of the German Reformed Church, 1845), 107–10; Philip Schaff, diary entry for December 31, 1844, Box: Philip Schaff Diaries 1844–90, Philip Schaff Manuscript Collection, The Burke Library, Union Theological Seminary, New York, New York; hereafter this archive is cited as UTS.
7. Philip Schaff, *Anglo-Germanism or the Significance of the German Nationality in the United States* (Chambersburg, Pa., 1846), 12–24.

first, he taught in German, but his students and his own rapid learning of English convinced him otherwise. Like the community around him, he cherished German culture while assimilating to American life. He married and began a family within two years of his arrival. Reformed catechisms and Grimm's fairy tales remained staples of his life.[8]

In Schaff's mind, Anglo-German unity combined ever more forcefully with Christ's Great Commission, expanded his sense of a Christian mission, and made him a forceful advocate of assimilation and adaptation of the best within German traditions to the best within American culture. The best gift Germans could give to the United States was tough-minded German evangelical scholarship in order to make American Christianity stronger, deeper, and broader in vision. Schaff accepted English as the language of the future and rejected the rigidity of those German ministers and missionaries who held on to the German language tenaciously as a sine qua non.[9]

During this "Mercersburg period" from 1844 to 1865, Philip Schaff developed his theology and began his extensive works in church history.[10] While putting future German Reformed ministers through their paces, he dreamed of developing a German-American school of theology. To court the German-American community at large, he published and edited a journal called *Der Deutsche Kirchenfreund*. In 1854 Schaff returned to Germany, acting like another de Tocqueville, to explain and defend the United States to the king and others in Prussia and throughout Europe. As an advocate of more religious freedom and transatlantic understanding, he became a missionary in reverse. Schaff then endured the rigors of the American Civil War and, as he witnessed its cruelties, became an antislavery advocate.[11]

To be closer to publishers and free to pursue wider goals, Schaff moved in 1865 to New York. For a time, he defended the traditional day of rest and worship with the New York Sabbath Committee against the encroachment of secularizing influences. He claimed that the American Sabbath "was

8. David S. Schaff, *The Life*, 93–5, 105, 133–4; Philip Schaff, diary entry for December 31, 1844, P.S. diaries 1844–90, UTS; Philip Schaff, "Reminiscences," inside cover; Linn Harbaugh, "the Example of a Christian Scholar" (undated and unpublished), 16–18, Box 7: Schaff Mementos and Memorials, Philip Schaff papers, Evangelical and Reformed Historical Society, Philip Schaff Library, Lancaster Theological Seminary, Lancaster, Pa.; hereafter this archive is cited as ERHS.
9. Philip Schaff, *Anglo-Germanism*, 13–15.
10. Philip Schaff, *What Is Church History? A Vindication of the Idea of Historical Development*, transl. by John W. Nevin (Philadelphia, 1846); Philip Schaff, *History of the Apostolic Church*, transl. by Edward D. Yeomans (New York, 1853; Edinburgh, 1854).
11. David Schaff, *The Life*, 163–5; Philip Schaff, ed., *Der Deutsche Kirchenfreund. Organ Für die Gemeinsamen Interessen oder Amerikanisch-Deutschen Kirchen*, vols. 1–6 (Mercersburg, Pa., 1848–53); Philip Schaff, *America: A Sketch of its Political, Social, and Religious Character*, ed. by Perry Miller (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, [1854] 1961); Philip Schaff, "The Gettysburg Week," *Scribner's Magazine* 16 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, July–December 1894), 21–54.

in danger of being crucified between two thieves, Irish Whiskey and German beer." Soon, however, the Union Theological Seminary offered him a professorship, and there he spent the remainder of his life as a Presbyterian. Here he edited such colossal works as the English translation of Johann Peter Lange's *A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures* and the Anglo-American reconstruction of J. J. Herzog's *Real Encyclopedia,* which became known as the *Schaff–Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge.*[12]

In this New York period, Schaff was free to participate in transatlantic supradenominational affairs and projects. He joined the Evangelical Alliance and became one of its leading spokesmen for Christian unity and religious freedom. In the Anglo-American effort to revise the King James version of the Bible, Schaff chaired the American contingent, which included a host of scholars from many denominations. Besides doing some translation of the New Testament, Schaff showed remarkable diplomatic powers in seeing the project through the times when it was threatened by dissension and Anglo-American rivalry. Schaff was the only scholar in this project whose native language was not English. In 1893 he participated in the Parliament of Religions in Chicago when other evangelicals felt it would mean compromising their faith. By the end of his life, Schaff had become a consummate ecumenical advocate for church unity while never abandoning orthodox reformed theology.[13]

During his American years, Schaff rose to prominence. He knew James Buchanan, Robert F. B. Morse, the inventor of the telegraph, and Cyrus McCormick, and he met on occasion such people as Abraham Lincoln, Ulysses S. Grant, and Harriet Beecher Stowe. He knew most of the important religious figures of the day, such as Henry Ward Beecher, Charles Hodge, Horace Bushnell, and Dwight L. Moody. His many trips to Europe brought him into contact with Fredrick William IV, Prince Metternich, Otto von Bismarck, and Leopold von Ranke, as well as a host of religious figures of the Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Protestant persuasions.[14] The timid Swiss-German immigrant who had hesitated to leave Germany had become a renowned church historian, theologian, and ecumenist.

12. Philip Schaff, "The Christian Sabbath," in *Christ and Christianity* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, [August 11, 1863], 1885); David Schaff, *The Life,* 221–7; Philip Schaff to Norman White, June 20, 1870, Letter Box 4, ERHS; Johann Peter Lange, *A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures, Critical, Doctrinal, and Homiletic,* 12 vols. (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1960); *The New Schaff–Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge,* ed. Samuel M. Jackson (New York: Funk & Wagnalls Co., 1908); an updated version was published by Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Mich., 1960.
13. David Schaff, *The Life,* 253–7, 357, 483–6; Philip Schaff, diary entries for April 4 and 5, 1865, P.S. diaries 1844–90, UTS.
14. Gary K. Pranger, "Philip Schaff (1819–1893): Portrait of an Immigrant Theologian," Ph.D. dissertation (University of Illinois at Chicago, 1987), 150–92, 284–334.

Schaff's Christian life remained consistent and resilient. As an emigrant, he absorbed a moderate Anglo-Saxonism. He adapted to the United States with ease but maintained close intellectual and social ties with Germany. He formulated a developmental, organic, providential view of history and a unique mediating evangelical theology that tolerated liberal positions, yet remained orthodox and fundamentalistic. Schaff had a clear mission that expanded as his career progressed. He worked tirelessly to transplant the best of German evangelical scholarship to the United States.

THE TEACHER

Philip Schaff affected American evangelical education by introducing his students to German speculative methodology as well as German theological ideas.

From 1800 to 1865, seminaries in America provided the only graduate education then available.[15] The German Reformed Seminary at Mercersburg was the oldest of three seminaries, serving a denomination of approximately 100,000 members and, by 1860, counting 356 ministers. Although the denomination remained a small element in American Christianity, its role within the Pennsylvania German community was unquestionably important.

In general, Schaff merely followed Frederick Augustus Rauch, his predecessor at Mercersburg, who was the seminary's first president until his death in 1841. Rauch had come from Germany and established speculative methods of teaching that Schaff improved upon. It had been Rauch's ambition to develop an Anglo-German system of thought, just as Schaff hoped to create a German-American school of theology.[16] Both failed to realize these dreams, but both were ground breakers in that German thought was brought to bear on American evangelical minds. Moreover, it was not just what the students learned, but how they learned it, that became important.

Schaff made an immediate impact on the classroom by stressing a reverential attitude toward the institutionalized church and its past. Enamored of high church ecclesiasticism, Schaff, however, meant much more than the Reformed Church. Schaff inculcated in his students a tolerant respect

15. Mark A. Noll, "The University Arrives in America, 1870–1930: Traditionalism During the Academic Revolution," in Joel A. Carpenter and Kenneth Shipps, eds., *Making Higher Education Christian: The History and Mission of Evangelical Colleges in America* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Christian University Press and William B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., 1987), 106.
16. *The New Schaff–Herzog Encyclopedia* (1908), vol. 9, 404.

for all Christian communions and schools of thought.[17] On the one hand, this clashed with the exclusivist minds of many immigrants and, on the other hand, challenged the fundamentalist-nativist minds in the American churches. Schaff also stressed the devotional spirit in private life as most important, far beyond the pew and mere intellectual assent. This widening of horizons that Schaff had learned so well from his mentors was his lasting legacy to his own students.

In his teaching, Schaff enjoyed ranging through all areas of theology, including much of the German theoretical work, but he insisted that practical theology take precedent over the speculative. The professor's chair should be connected with the pastor's pulpit and the seminary with the congregation. Here Schaff introduced things that were truly new for his time. He showed future pastors how to use church history properly in the creation of deeper sermons.[18] Schaff hoped that the Sunday sermon would reflect an enlarged perspective on Christianity and its living history. Much of Christian society in the United States at this time believed that Bible study by itself supplied ministers with all that they needed for effective preaching to the common layman. Church history itself served primarily to glorify a particular denomination.[19] Thus Schaff introduced ecumenical views when few espoused them.

Schaff guided students in systematic study; he tried to show them how to enjoy it for its own sake, and how to reap the rewards when it was undertaken joyfully and done faithfully with prayer and a "judicious spirit."[20] This judicious spirit helped to observe human nature and all of life with great care. There Schaff united an intellectual appreciation of many ideas with careful observation and with the usage of reformed theology.

Schaff's daily classroom habits, as reflected in his students' notebooks, revealed his meticulous preparation; his early lecture notes on church history formed the outline for the later *History of the Christian Church*. Schaff used many textbooks and had such a bibiliographic command that citations flowed easily from his mind. The usual classroom method was based on the teacher's review and the student's recitation of past lessons. Sometimes Schaff took one step back from the material, played the impartial observer, and simply martialed the facts without comment. At other times he lectured

17. Philip Schaff, "Lectures on Christian Dogmatics," Box: Lectures at Mercersburg 1844–66, 13 manuscripts, ERHS.
18. Ibid.
19. Henry Warner Bowden, *Church History in the Age of Science: Historiographical Patterns in the United States 1876–1918* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1971), 40.
20. George H. Shriver, "Philip Schaff as a Teacher of Church History," *Journal of Presbyterian History*, 47 (March 1979), 76–84.

without notes, offering personal observations and quips that students signaled with the phrase "Dr. Schaff thinks . . . " Sometimes he read from primary sources such as the Roman Liturgy or from the writings of Thomas a Kempis to introduce students to the rich past of the church. Schaff's own records and his students' notes reveal thorough, up-to-date scholarship, piety, and humor, as well as some absentmindedness.[21]

His many students over the years, from Mercersburg to New York, had great respect for him. Schaff's influence was profound, although it is impossible to document it thoroughly beyond the notebooks of his students. If nothing else, Schaff succeeded in deepening their faith and widening their perspectives of the church at large, both characteristics of German evangelical and speculative thought.

THE THEOLOGIAN AND CHURCH HISTORIAN

Schaff's teachings on theology and church history went beyond the classroom when he began to publish his works. Very early he came into contact with the American theological community at large. He drew criticism as well as respect. For the most part, the criticism led to more, not less, interest in German theology. In the eyes of American evangelicals, Schaff appeared to be a novel figure just as they were beginning to study German theology in a serious way. Schaff's theology was meant to be liberating as well as unifying, and thus his ideas had an incalculable effect – as pollen thrown to the wind. How these ideas settled in other minds is impossible to determine, but we can detect the directions they gave.

Schaff's own theology was anchored in, and encompassed by, the traditional reformed theology of John Calvin. It holds that God's providence, infinity, and sovereignty are behind and decree all things, including man's freely made decisions, and consequently all of history, to bring about God's perfectly good will out of and despite man's evil disposition. Adam in the beginning, and all people thereafter, create sin, but God allows it that he might prove his perfect love and mercy to all. Christ, the God-man, had to come to redeem all the elect, and to plant the seed of faith by the Holy Spirit that now draws the redeemed toward the message of free grace. Nothing a person does can bring on salvation and eternal life. Only God opens up the heart and gives it the ability to accept or reject the message. Only after the secure knowledge that God has chosen the believer and the believer's acceptance of Christ as Savior

21. Ibid.

and Lord does a life of sanctification proceed, allowing the freedom to obey or disobey God. The unredeemed are imprisoned in their own sinful natures and therefore hopelessly lost. By remaining in this world, the Christian's character is shaped by life's problems, leading to a recognition of total dependence of God. The heavenly relationship is then a reconciliation between God and his creation. The world of sin and error in this theology reveals that the place of men and women has to be with God, the Creator, not against or separated from his existence. In between God's creation and the millennial reign of Christ, the history of the world as we know it unfolds.[22]

This theology, of course, had been stressed in narrow as well as broad ways over the course of time, and Schaff's own beliefs represented a certain latitudinarian Calvinism; he rejected infant damnation and believed that Christ, out of love, had died to save all men and women. The elect were known only by God, so Christians had an obligation to love and present the gospel to all people. Pre-Christian people who had never heard the gospel could be saved by an act of Christ's mercy in heaven under circumstances only God could determine. Moreover, Schaff did not believe in a literal inspiration or dictation of the Scriptures by God to men. God used fallible minds and circumstances to present his infallible thoughts and purposes. Schaff did not believe in "the absolute inerrancy of the original autographs which nobody has ever seen or will see – for they are irretrievably lost." The Bible maintained its authority, in Schaff's view, because God's power and principles reside there. It was a living Word with the words of men. Some of these thoughts he considered unfit to be taught as doctrines, but only as speculations.[23]

Schaff's theology and what can be called his "theology of history" incorporated a modified Hegelian triad with an intensive organic development of Christianity. For Schaff, "theology" and "history" were so intertwined that they were interchangeable terms. The thesis, antithesis, and synthesis are worked out naturally by people and simultaneously by God's providence. Human development is seen as a series of tossings and turnings in reaction to the events of history, particularly the crucifixion and resur-

22. Philip Schaff, ed., *The Creeds of Christendom,* 6th ed., 3 vols., revised by David S. Schaff, vol. 3, *The Evangelical Protestant Creeds* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1985), 7–11, 18, 307–28, 601–14, 623–4; Philip Schaff, *The Principle of Protestantism;* Schaff, *What Is Church History?,* 3–16.

23. David Schaff, *The Life,* 426–7; Philip Schaff, untitled article on infant damnation and baptism, *The Independent* (May 15, 1875), Box: Autobiographical Scrapbook, 60, UTS; Philip Schaff, *Die Sünde wider den Heiligen Geist, nebst einem historischen Anhang uber das Lebensende des Francesco Spierra* (Halle: J.F. Lippert, 1841); Philip Schaff, "Other Heresy Trials and the Briggs Case," *The Forum* 12 (January 1892): 633.

rection of Christ. No matter how chaotic or complicated things may seem, or how things may change, everything will confirm the truth of God in Jesus Christ in the end. Thus "catholic" or universal Christianity characterized Schaff's theology of history, and he used this theology to work untiringly for the unity of Christianity.[24]

Along with John Williams Nevin, a close colleague, Schaff shaped this reformed theology into the "Mercersburg theology" soon after he arrived in the United States in two works, entitled *The Principle of Protestantism* (1845) and *What Is Church History?* (1846).[25] It should be noted, however, that they never developed a complete system, as did other American theologians such as Jonathan Edwards, Charles Hodge, or W. G. T. Shedd. Nevertheless, this Mercersburg Theology emphasized an adherence to the Apostles' Creed and the Incarnation of Christ: "the Word made Flesh," Christ being fully God and fully man, who inextricably connects the spiritual and the physical. This theology held to the mystical presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper, as Calvin and many reformed fathers had maintained, and not as asserted by the Roman Catholic Church. A vigorous worship emphasized a compelling and liberating use of liturgical forms that would allow one to absorb Christ in symbol, spirit, and reality.[26]

Schaff and Nevin hoped that the Mercersburg theology would be a visible, concrete step toward bringing all believers into a unity that would still allow diversity. Thus the Mercersburg theology represented another attempt by German and English religionists to develop a mediating system that would synthesize the best of contending ecclesiastical parties and ultimately draw Roman Catholics and Protestants back together. However, Schaff believed that such a synthesis could only be accomplished "by mystical fellowship, *unio-mystica* of believers with Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord," and not by compromise, diplomacy, sacramental magic, or even logical or theological argument.[27]

Within this mediating system, Schaff argued that the Reformation developed out of medieval Catholicism. This was a bold move, as American Protestant ultraconservatives held to the Waldensian theory of church development; it claimed that the pure doctrines of the Reformation were maintained from the days of the Apostles to the age of Luther, but somehow

24. Philip Schaff, *What Is Church History?;* Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church,* 8 vols. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdman's Publ. Co., 1984), vol. 1: *Apostolic Christianity,* 57–8, 72.
25. See footnotes 6 and 10.
26. George W. Richards, "The Mercersburg Theology: Its Purposes and Principles," *Church History* 20 (1951), 45–6.
27. Ibid., 46.

bypassed the Roman Catholic Church and survived underground, as revealed by the records of the French Waldensians.[28]

The Mercersburg theology made an immediate impact on the German Reformed Church when Schaff was put on trial for heresy at the instigation of a small minority. Most of the immediate church, the American evangelical community, and his mentors back in Germany were dismayed by the trial. Soon vindicated, Schaff received great publicity from the trial.[29] However, the Mercersburg theological movement failed, not because of the trial itself but because of what it represented in terms of conditions in America in general and the German Reformed Church in particular; American Christianity was diametrically opposed to ecclesiastical unification, with the exception of some sympathetic but powerless divines.

American evangelicalism had grown up in the egalitarian Jacksonian era, a time of virulent feelings against new immigration and Catholicism. The nation's identity was still felt by many to be unformed. Yet a combination of American patriotism, commonsense philosophy, and Protestant theology had forged a norm that gave the nation's demeanor and religious denominations a conservative, simplistic character. Those who held to this norm were threatened by that which was foreign. Nativism, which grew to become part of the German Reformed Church, was only the outward manifestation of this larger, more comprehensive norm that essentially gave the United States its genuine identity. Schaff's trial for heresy had spread the fear that somehow he would allow German infidelity to creep into religious education. This fear kept him from being installed as the first president of Franklin and Marshall College in 1853.[30]

Nevertheless, the Mercersburg theology affected American evangelical thinking in a number of ways. First, it forced American evangelicals to reexamine both their view of Protestant history arising from pre-Reformation times and their relationship to the Roman Catholic Church. Here Schaff was instrumental in emancipating the study of church history from its parochial confines, thus making it a much more comprehensive study with a much wider perspective. Second, it made evangelicals reconsider the nature and importance of worship. This is of long-lasting import because one can

28. George H. Shriver, ed., *American Religious Heretics* (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1966), 30–2.

29. David Schaff, *The Life,* 119–20, 200; Charles Hodge, ed., review of *The Principle of Protestantism,* by Philip Schaff, in *The Princeton Review,* (October 1845), 626–36; Charles Hodge, ed., review of *History of the Apostolic Church, with a General Introduction to Church History* by Philip Schaff, in *The Princeton Review* 26 (1845), 150–92.

30. David Schaff, *The Life,* 197–8; Philip Schaff, Letter of Resignation from the Faculty of the Reformed Theological Seminary, 1865, Box 4: Autobiographical Miscellaneous, ERHS.

still hear high church evangelicals use Schaff's name in their appreciation of the deep significance he placed on liturgical worship. Third, it challenged American divines to consider whether evangelical theology was meant to be concretely fixed for all time in all of its particulars, as the Princeton school of theology of Charles Hodge claimed, or whether it was something malleable that could be enlarged and improved upon, a view adopted by Schaff's evangelical mentors back in Germany. In time, American evangelicals accepted Schaff as an authority and learned from him.[31]

After leaving the German Reformed Church behind, Schaff set an agenda of work that was meant to court the wider audience he had gained. He earnestly hoped to shape American Christianity through the volumes of his church history and his encyclopedic works in order to educate all toward a unified view of Christendom. Schaff also tried to use his theology as a mediating force that would unite conservative and liberal Protestants. This was all the more necessary in order to counter the ever-increasing effects that German higher criticism and Darwinism were having on American thought throughout the late nineteenth century.[32]

Throughout the days of debate over evolution, Schaff at first rejected and then tried to accommodate the new scientific trend. On September 18, 1876, Schaff wrote in his diary that he had heard Thomas Henry Huxley speak on the subject and curtly remarked: "But I was not convinced or even much impressed." Schaff simply treated Huxley as another biblical higher critic and refuted his irreverent agnosticism. Yet by 1893, Schaff conceded a certain validity to evolution and thought it would fit into his theory of historical development once the facts of the matter were determined.[33]

Another feature of Schaff's thought that may have confused students was his belief in liberality of study, which he held from the beginning. Schaff believed that biblical criticism kept theology from stagnation and that the Bible was not threatened by close scrutiny. Schaff's students understood his position "to be that textual research and the most destructive criticism have not disproved a single doctrine commonly held among evangelical Christians."[34]

31. Philip Schaff, "Princeton und Mercersburg," *Der Deutsche Kirchenfreund* 1 (1848), 154–7, 169–78.
32. David Schaff, *The Life*, 221; "The Professorship Offered to Philip Schaff," *The Reformed Messenger* (June 22, 1870), 43.
33. Philip Schaff, diary entry for September 18, 1876, Schaff diaries 1844–90, UTS; Philip Schaff, *The Reunion of Christendom: A Paper Prepared for the Parliament of Religions and the National Conference of the Evangelical Alliance Held in Chicago, September and October, 1893* (New York: Evangelical Alliance Office, 1893), 36–8.
34. David Schaff, *The Life*, 478–9.

In all of this, Schaff accepted freedom of religion and inquiry and rejected Christianity's intolerant past. Christian love and toleration were to be shown, not for reaching compromising positions, but for allowing scholars freely to study all things that would eventually point to the conclusions of reformed theology. This is why he participated in the Parliament of Religions and Christendom held in Chicago in 1893.

Schaff's students may have misinterpreted this mediating stance as he encouraged them to study in Germany, which exposed them to more liberal trends. Schaff, for instance, befriended Charles Augustus Briggs and promoted him to a teaching position at the Union Theological Seminary. Schaff influenced Briggs's education and encouraged him to study in Germany under Dorner. Briggs, however, was not content simply to learn German evangelicalism and began to accept much from the higher criticism regarding the authenticity, authorship, and dating of certain books of the Bible. Furthermore, it appeared that Briggs based sources of authority in religious matters on the Bible, the church, and reason, in that order. This went against the beliefs of conservative Bible scholars, who believed all authority resided in the Scriptures alone. In 1893 Briggs was put on trial for heresy in the Presbyterian Church; because the Union Theological Seminary and Schaff defended him, the Presbyterian Church severed its ties to that institution.[35]

CONCLUSION

Philip Schaff influenced American evangelical education in a variety of ways, directly through teaching and writing on reformed theology and church history, indirectly through his belief in freedom of inquiry and religion, which were implicit and explicit messages he transmitted in the classroom and in his works.[36] Though Schaff never moved from his broad Calvinistic stance, he may have pushed some students to adopt far more latitudinarian views. In the 1840s and 1850s, Schaff's students saw him as a groundbreaker and a revolutionary. By the end of his life, they saw him as an anachronism.

If Schaff unintentionally influenced students to move away from evangelicalism, he was not alone. In his time, American educators and students in general were drawn increasingly to German graduate study and to ideas

35. Philip Schaff, "Other Heresy Trials and the Briggs Case," 621–33.
36. Philip Schaff, "The Development of Religious Freedom," in *Christ and Christianity: Studies on Christology, Creeds and Confessions, Protestantism and Romanism, Sunday Observance, Religious Freedom, and Christian Union* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1885), 285–91.

that seemed to be liberating, such as, for example, the ethical, modernistic theology of Albrecht Ritschl and the studies of Karl G. A. Harnack in church history. Thus a whole new era in the history of education, with its changing ideas of reality, challenged the older, largely Christian-based beliefs.[37]

However, the claim that Schaff had been more liberating than his fellow conservatives is somewhat misleading. Despite his belief in freedom of thought, along with his mediating theology, all of his friends were conservative evangelicals. There is no contradiction between Schaff's meshing easily with conservative American life and at the same time directing students toward more liberating positions. For Schaff believed that religious liberty in America always moved within the boundaries of Christian civilization, which governed public morality, and that it would never transgress those bounds.[38] Schaff's conservatism would compare easily with any that comes to mind today. Even Briggs's latitudinarianism, when seen in its full light, reveals him to be what might be called a moderate evangelical and not a real liberal theologian. Moreover, when Schaff died in 1893, he viewed American progress as limitless; thus he was one more perhaps naive nineteenth-century intellectual who did not live to see the momentous problems of the twentieth century.[39]

Schaff firmly believed that Christianity helps one to transcend one's own culture and foibles in that it shapes a wide world view and brings one closer to the Savior. As modernists tied religion to the vicissitudes of culture and ultimately concluded that culture shapes religion, Schaff's belief in Christian progress was not tied to culture in the same way: In his view, God uses culture and man's foibles to accomplish his higher purposes. Thus Schaff's central beliefs transcended the spirit of the age and the unintentional effects of his ideas when his mediating theology seemed to die with him. Through his works, Schaff achieved a lasting influence on evangelical students, as his studies are still used in evangelical circles today. Though dated in some aspects, his reformed Christian theology, his views of church history, and his faith in Christ have remained timeless and have not lost their meaning.

37. Noll, "The University Arrives in America, 1870–1930," 100.
38. Philip Schaff, *Church and State in the United States or the American Idea of Religious Liberty and Its Practical Effects* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1888), 16, 35–6, 44–5, 53–62, 73–83.
39. Ibid., 36, 83.