CASCADE *Books*
A division of WIPF *and* STOCK *Publishers*

199 West 8th Avenue, Suite 3, Eugene, OR 97401
Tel. (541) 344-1528 • Fax (541) 344-1506
Visit our Web site at www.wipfandstock.com

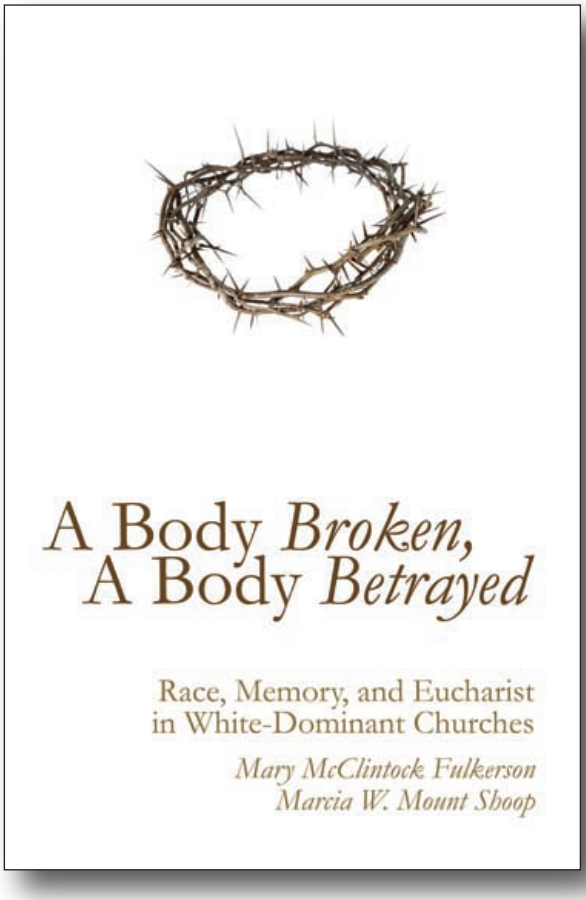
Race and privilege are issues that cry out for new kinds of attention and healing in American society. More specifically, we are being called to surface the dynamics of whiteness especially in contexts where whites have had the most power in America. The church is one of those contexts—particularly churches that have traditionally been seen as the stalwarts of the American religious landscape: mainline Protestant churches.

Theologians and Presbyterian ministers Mary McClintock Fulkerson and Marcia Mount Shoop invite us to acknowledge and address the wounds of race and privilege that continue to harm and diminish the life of the church. Using Eucharist as a template for both the church's blindness and for Christ's redemptive capacity, this book invites faith communities, especially white-dominant churches, into new ways of re-membering what it means to be the Body of Christ. In a still racialized society, can the Body of Christ truly acknowledge and dress the wounds of race and privilege? Re-membering Christ's broken and betrayed body may be just the healing path we need.

A Body *Broken*, A Body *Betrayed*

Race, Memory, and Eucharist in White-Dominant Churches

Mary McClintock Fulkerson
Marcia W. Mount Shoop



MARY McCLINTOCK FULKERSON is Professor of Theology at Duke Divinity School in Durham, North Carolina, and an ordained minister in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). She is the author of *Changing the Subject: Women's Discourses and Feminist Theology* (1994) and *Places of Redemption: Theology for a Worldly Church* (2007).

MARCIA W. MOUNT SHOOP is a theologian, minister, and author of *Let the Bones Dance: Embodiment and the Body of Christ* (2010) and *Touchdowns for Jesus and Other Signs of Apocalypse: Lifting the Veil on Big-Time Sports* (2014). She blogs at www.marciamountshoop.com.

ISBN: 978-1-62032-904-7 | 106 pp. | $14 | paper

"The problem this volume addresses—the quiet, subtle way race deforms predominantly white, Presbyterian congregations—couldn't be more timely. Its authors bring to this fraught subject a well-honed commitment to racial justice and a wealth of experience in Presbyterian congregational life. . . . Clergy, scholars, and laity have much to gain from this insightful and accessible blend of trenchant academic analysis, theological wisdom, and genuine compassion."
—*ELLEN T. ARMOUR, Carpenter Associate Professor of Feminist Theology, Vanderbilt Divinity School*

"[This book] guides us through the painful process of acknowledging the existence of racism in the church. It calls us to the difficult spiritual practice of self-reflection, self-examination, and truth-telling. . . . This book is an invitation to approach the Lord's Table in authenticity to receive the nourishment that can foster reconciliation on a personal and communal level."
—*WANDA M. LUNDY, Director of Doctor of Ministry program, New York Theological Seminary*

"A bold invitation to explore the healing opportunities that Jesus offers us through a life together at the table, where denial, fear, betrayal, and abuse can be explored and cured, creating the possibility that we might move beyond the dismemberment of the Body of Christ."
—*MAGDALENA I. GARCÍA, teaching elder in the Presbytery of Chicago, hospice chaplain*

"A prayer request is being answered with this book by two of this country's premier feminist theologians. . . . Before we can understand the Eucharist as an answer to the racial condition we first must grasp how it questions white privilege, and Fulkerson and Mount Shoop help us do this."
—*WILLIE JAMES JENNINGS, Yale Divinity School*

Media, Examination, and Review Copies:
Contact: James Stock
(541) 344-1528, ext 103 or James@wipfandstock.com

Orders: Contact your favorite bookseller or order directly from the publisher via phone (541) 344-1528, fax (541) 344-1506 or e-mail us at orders@wipfandstock.com

A BODY BROKEN, *A* BODY BETRAYED

RACE, MEMORY, AND EUCHARIST IN WHITE-DOMINANT CHURCHES

Mary McClintock Fulkerson
and Marcia W. Mount Shoop

CASCADE *Books* • Eugene, Oregon

A BODY BROKEN, A BODY BETRAYED
Race, Memory, and Eucharist in White-Dominated Churches

Cascade Books
An Imprint of Wipf and Stock Publishers
199 W. 8th Ave., Suite 3
Eugene, OR 97401

www.wipfandstock.com

ISBN 13: 978-1-62032-904-7

Cataloging-in-Publication data:

Fulkerson, Mary McClintock, 1950–

A body broken, a body betrayed : race, memory, and eucharist in white-dominant churches / Mary McClintock Fulkerson and Marcia W. Mount Shoop.

xvi + 90 p. ; 21.5 cm. —Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 13: 978-1-62032-904-7

1. Lord's Supper and Christian union. 2. Race relations—Religious aspects—Christianity. I. Mount Shoop, Marcia W. II. Title.

BT702 .F85 2015

Manufactured in the U.S.A.

Contents

Preface

As a white woman raised and ordained in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), I grew up in a predominantly white Protestant denomination. Even as schools have gradually become more racially diverse, my childhood experience growing up in the 1950s and 1960s in the South was very segregated. My "religious" experience in Presbyterian churches was pretty much the same. Language of "loving thy neighbor" and "welcoming all of God's children" was common but rarely, if ever, embodied so that "neighbor" intentionally invoked racial and class diversity.

What has been challenging and transformative for my habituation into being part of the dominant race and class began as an academic exploration of the dynamics of an interracial church. The community I studied was primarily comprised of African American and white folks, as well as persons with disabilities. I discovered that despite my theoretical commitment to welcoming the "other," my experiential and bodily habituation was deeply shaped by "white ownership of space," as one of my African American colleagues defines it.

Being a minority was a difficult but crucial transitional experience. My pursuit of this project exploring white practices of colorblind racism became a possibility after that research, but has been particularly enhanced by my friendship with Marcia, whose awareness and work around racial diversity in the PC (U.S.A.) were and continue to be profoundly rich and generative. Our work together has been quite important for me, and my primary acknowledgments must be of the community I "studied" and continue to

participate in and of Marcia, whose deep wisdom about church and white colorblindness made this book possible.

I am also grateful to William Hart, who gave me language for my colorblindness. I continue to be thankful for Leoneda Inge, who co-leads the Pauli Murray reading group with me at our multiracial church, as well as those church members who have shared stories about their own experience of race throughout our five years of gathering monthly to explore and celebrate the life of the famous activist and lesbian who was the first female African American to be ordained as an Episcopal priest. And there are of course so many others whose lives and wisdom have mattered so much to me, even if I cannot name them all here.

Mary McClintock Fulkerson
Durham, North Carolina

Like Mary, I grew up steeped in the culture of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Even with a "racism-aware" household, a father who was a card-carrying member of the NAACP, and a mother from southern Mississippi with stories of antiracist activism in her family at a time and in a place where white people just didn't do such things, I did not begin to understand how deeply the dynamics of whiteness had shaped me until I was an adult. Going deeper than commitments to racial justice can be excruciating for white people, maybe especially for white people like me who wanted to believe we are different, we are "good" white people. Going deeper, however, has been a life-giving practice that keeps me on a healing path around the wounds of race and privilege.

There have been and continue to be many steps along the way in this journey with race and privilege in my life, but the most profound aspect is a very personal and precious one that words will always fail to describe adequately. That radical shift has come through love—the love my husband, John, and I have for our godson, Chris. Chris Dixon came into our lives almost twenty years

ago as an eleven-year-old growing up across the street from the church we attended in Charlotte, North Carolina. What started out as a pretty typical white, justice-oriented act of helping someone in need quickly became a connection that changed everything for us. In helping to parent Chris all of these years, I have learned more about my whiteness than from anything else in my life. These years of life together have been complicated and joyful, heartbreaking and heart-making. The love of this relationship and the growth of seeing myself and Chris in new ways are etched into this book.

I have also been blessed beyond measure by my colleagues, my sisters and brothers in Christ, whom I have worked alongside in the multicultural[1] movement in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and in ecumenical circles with others who are hungry for a church that embodies God's complexity with more integrity. There is no way I can name everyone in this Spirit-filled movement who has blessed my life. The Rev. James Lee, the Rev. Raafat Girgis, the Rev. Magdalena Garcia, the Rev. Dr. Wanda Lundy, the Rev. Dr. Gun Ho Lee, the Rev. Jerrod Lowry, the Rev. Nibs Stroupe, and the Rev. Jake Kim are just a few of the people from the Presbyterian context who have been a blessing on this journey.

I have appreciated the work of Mary McClintock Fulkerson for a long time. I give thanks for the opportunity to build a friendship with her during my family's time in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. Mary and I immediately found that we had a shared passion for the exploration of race and privilege. For both of us this passion comes from the heart of our lives as believers and as theologians. This passion comes fraught with pain and disappointment. It also comes with deep conviction. Mary's diligence and intellect have made this project more conversant with a broader set of questions. She is forever finding more resources, more conversation partners, and more insights. I am grateful for the texture

1. Part of our growth as a movement includes how we name and identify ourselves. The word *multicultural* is not without problems. I tend to use *cross-cultural* and *inter-cultural* more frequently now, but the movement itself is still most often recognized by the word *multicultural*.

those commitments brought to this book. And I am also grateful that our friendship continues from here.

I also extend my gratitude to all the church communities who have helped form me and who have welcomed me into their midst as pastor, teacher, preacher, officiant at the Lord's Table, and child of God. This book is written for the church and toward the redemptive promise that we profess. Thanks be to God for the visions that call us toward healing the Body of Christ.

Marcia W. Mount Shoop
West Lafayette, Indiana

Prolegomenon

Bodies matter
Christ's body, broken for you and me
Our bodies, broken and born
into layers of ambiguity and promise

Bodies are not independent, discrete, cut off
We are enfleshed and entangled with all that is
The blood that flows through our spidering veins
Is the water that laps the shores of lakefronts and oceansides

Bodies are never-not tangled up with shared oxygen
and with the telltale signs of our distortion, toxins
and the sharp edges of quiet violence
that draw themselves especially toward the
biases of pigment, genitalia, and other accidents of birth

These bodies feed on connection
They languish in isolation
And they simultaneously inherit and create worlds
Unique and shared, brutal and promising

Primal, cellular, flesh navigation
That is how we live and move and have our being
There is no body apart from some body
And there is no some body apart from
other bodies—otherized bodies, racialized bodies,
gendered bodies, sacralized bodies,
wounded and healing bodies

We share One body
Multifarious emergence
Irreducible particularities
Identities taught, fraught, sought, and
Processing from hard truths and dreams
That we can taste and see
And hunger for all the more

Bodies matter
And they gather
They notice hunger
Unless they have gone too long without
Being fed

Bodies matter
And we wonder
How it is that we are invited to live
And breathe lives
that matter, too

And His body, the body
who reverberates our distortion
And our redemption
Betrayal and regeneration
The body that scoffs at death and
Defines new birth

His body traveled through a birth canal
And fingered wounds—his and ours
He had eyes to see
And he tasted
our pain and promise

PROLEGOMENON

He took bread and ripped it
Into pieces that might feed us
Our bodies, not simply our imagination
But the cells that divide
connect, create, perish, and live

Marcia W. Mount Shoop, 2014

one

Race, Memory, and Eucharist: An Introduction

Our stories tell us who we are, at least that is what Christianity tells us. Our salvation story, the stories of Scripture, and testimonies of faith define us and inform our religious identities. But what about when our stories are incomplete? Or worse yet, what about when our stories about ourselves are lies? What about when stories dis-member or contort part of the Body of Christ by denying truth, silencing dissonance, or ignoring wounds?

The communion table is set for us as a place where we come to be welcomed and reconciled to God. Scripture tells us that in God's kingdom people from all nations, from all tribes and tongues will come to stand before the throne of God, singing praises (Rev 7:9). Jesus called himself the bread of life (John 6:48) and the true vine (John 15:1). Scripture tells us about Christ's last supper with his friends in an upstairs room. There he called the bread they ate his body, he told them the wine was the new covenant sealed in his blood, and he told them to eat it and drink it all (Luke 22). There he named the betrayal that would condemn him to death: "But see, the one who betrays me is with me, and his hand is on the table" (Luke 22:21); there he told the truth about the friends who would harm him: "You will all become deserters because of me this night" (Matt 26:31; Mark 14:27). And "troubled in spirit," he declared after washing his disciples' feet that "one of you will betray me"

(John 14:21). And Scripture tells us this is a meal that, whenever celebrated, is to be done in remembrance of him (1 Cor 11:23–26).

And our institutional memory sifts through these stories to further interpret what happens at Eucharist and how it is achieved. John Calvin articulated the Reformed formula that the mystery and power of the Holy Spirit assure us of the real presence of Christ in our communion meal, "as if Christ were placed in bodily presence before our view, or handled by our hands."[1] Calvin describes how we are nourished at the Table with words like "refresh, strengthen, and exhilarate." Calvin basked in the mysterious efficacy of Eucharist, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to "truly unite things separated by space."[2] Somehow Christ dwells in us; somehow we, as gathered communities of disparate believers, are transformed into his body in the world.

Eucharistic liturgy and habit cultivate the expectation that we have a shared story and that we embody this shared story in our eucharistic practice. Yet when real bodies gather at the table there is a thoroughgoing dissonance that signals rupture and betrayal as well as particularity and possibility. Estranged relationships are allowed to splinter, and instead of seeing all nations and tongues represented at the table, often we look around and see people just like us. And many quietly partake of this feast we're told reflects God's hopes for humankind even as we are left thirsty and hungry for true communities of difference and reconciliation. We nibble at the bread of life and sip the cup of salvation. We keep our eyes down, wondering if we should taste more. With the echoes of an invitation to come and encounter the Body of Christ lingering in the air, we sit and wait for another day's sensation.

For most Christians the failure to duplicate Jesus' healing meals with outsiders is not intentional. Most churches understand themselves to be welcoming communities. "Inclusiveness" is a frequent descriptor in many church mission statements. Indeed, white-dominant churches have exorcised themselves of one of our nation's most egregious forms of exclusion—the historic sin

1. Calvin, *Institutes*, Book IV, 558.
2. Ibid., 563.

of racial segregation. Like most white Americans, predominantly white churches claim to be "colorblind." That is, many predominantly white churches aspire to see all persons, regardless of color, as God's children.[3]

A dominant contemporary white narrative is that of the church as a welcoming, colorblind community that gathers at the Table regularly to be reconciled with God as members somehow encounter the body and blood of Christ. The Eucharist is often equated with the social witness of the church: "Liturgy *is* social action,"[4] says Stanley Hauerwas, and Bernd Wannewetsch asserts that "it is *in worship itself* that the ethical in-forming of human acting and judging comes about."[5] If this is so, what kind of "social action" is being narrated and performed by this purportedly welcoming colorblind table fellowship? Despite the well-meaning discourse, this is a narrative and practice in dominant populations that bears more scrutiny, especially if we take Calvin seriously that in communion it is "as if Christ were placed in bodily presence before our view, or handled by our hands."[6] If Christ's presence has to do with bodies—his, of course, and ours as the "Body of Christ"—then the bodies at the Table matter.

To understand the function of Eucharist both in reproducing social brokenness and in potentially aiding in the transformation of our brokenness, we need a framework wise to the complexity of social trauma, race, and embodiment. We need more than the traditional visions of the past, whether that of Luther or of Calvin, of

3. There have been and continue to be differences between African American churches and predominantly white churches with regard to such postures. For an important study of different liturgical practices and worldviews relative to racial difference, see Haldeman, *Towards Liturgies That Reconcile*.

4. Hauerwas, *Christian Existence Today*, 107.

5. According to Wannenwetsch, "The formative happening takes place in the context of a human *receptivity which can also be described as acting and judging*. So the acting and judging of beings is only an outgrowth of worship, a possibility which *then* arises of responding in daily life to the acting and judging of God which has been experienced. It is *in worship itself* that the ethical in-forming of human acting and judging comes about." *Political Worship*, 6.

6. Calvin, *Institutes*, Book IV, 558

the early church or of medieval liturgy.[7] We need greater attention to the connections between embodied practice and theological imagination.[8] To identify and better address the "colorblindness" associated with much liturgical bodily practice, it is important to identify the nature of the problem as defined by bodies, social memory, and the ways that racialized injustices continue to impact our lives.[9] These patterns and practices embody the marks of traumatic memory in the unruly ways racialized violence (both systemic and chronic) reiterates itself in trivialized practices and mentalities. We invite a re-membering of Eucharist both by interrogating colorblindness and by making space for acknowledging the traumatic imprint of race in our believing communities. These focal points allow us to point toward transformative capacity in the way we re-member our Eucharistic practice.

Embodied Re-membering: Social Trauma and Racialized Communities

The word *trauma* literally means "wound." In Greek it refers to a wound of the body. Its contemporary use expands *trauma* to refer to "collective suffering," a suffering given further nuance relative to different theorizations of trauma.[10] Freudian theories around trauma shifted the focus on trauma's wounds toward the mind.[11]

7. Haldeman argues that liturgical theology "typically has two tendencies: to be critical of a contemporary practice and to be nostalgic as a way to address the problem." Even the standard ordo desired by many forms of liturgical scholarship, he argues, is not adequate to "fix" contemporary liturgical problems. Haldeman, *Toward Liturgies That Reconcile*, 3.

8. Liturgical scholar Siobhán Garrigan would agree. In her book on ritual she argues for attention to the face-to-face or intersubjective relations of Eucharist and its performativity. See Garrigan, *Beyond Ritual*.

9. Haldeman's work on the liturgical differences between African American worship and white Protestant worship also offers a fascinating study of different models for interracial worship that is not blind to the typical dominance of white practices. See his *Toward Liturgies That Reconcile*.

10. Alexander, *Trauma,* 2

11. Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, 3–4.

Many contemporary trauma theories are informed by Freud's understanding that the mind is not able to take in the immediate force of trauma and also by developing understandings of how bodies hold trauma. Trauma is, therefore, not fully integrated into consciousness but "imposes itself again, repeatedly" in nightmares, in repetitive actions, and in habituations.[12] Trauma is characterized by this simultaneity of deeply embodied impact and unassimilated experience. Cathy Caruth describes the dynamic of trauma as "complex ways of knowing and not knowing." The wounds of trauma "cry out" in the attempt to tell us of a reality or truth that is not otherwise available.[13]

The continued reality of trauma extends onto the larger template of history itself. History "bears the marks of trauma" in its endless repetition of violence.[14] Such endurance also requires the emergence of ongoing cultural representation and structural support. Indeed, the actual public awareness of a group's social suffering depends upon the successful distribution of these cultural representations and systems of support.[15] Representation is key to whether a collective harm or trauma is recognized, how it is recognized or defined, and the degree to which wider audiences take responsibility.[16] The "carrier group," that is, those who are marked by racism and who try to communicate the nature of the harm and attribution of responsibility, have always had narratives of horrific oppression and lament over the centuries, "counter-memories" to the dominant ones.[17] However, their access to modes of communication and to the power to persuade the larger population was

12. Ibid., 4.

13. Ibid.

14. Lange, *Trauma Recalled*, 99.

15. Alexander, *Trauma,* 15–30.

16. According to Jeffrey Alexander's social theory of trauma.

17. Ron Eyerman says that African Americans produced a "counter-memory," a term he borrows from Foucault. He provides a helpful complexification of this topic, pointing out that while it has been "always there as a referent" for different generations, there has never been one African American narrative of slavery. Eyerman, *Cultural Trauma,* 7, 18, 10–21.

of course profoundly constrained in the days of slavery.[18] Despite improvement over time, the concealment of this social harm is complex and ongoing. Given the complexities of trauma, the history of race in American religious communities unfolds and conceals itself in ways that we cannot fully describe or control but that are deeply formative.

Tangled in this snarl of dissonance, trivialization, estrangement, rhetoric, and possibility are tenacious threads of white denial and obliviousness. Race in white contexts is often cast as an issue that surfaces only when people of color bring it up—otherwise, everything is "fine." And many whites tend to navigate the world with the "I'm not a racist" mantra, all the while embodying unconscious racialized assumptions and biases that help form everything from neighborhoods to public and private policies, from gut reactions to people of color to intimate relationships. Privilege becomes obscured and affirmed by means of stories of the whence and the why of who we are and where we've been. Troubled, trivialized, and tormented memories conspire to render all the more tenacious the mentalities and blind spots of institutions like the church.

And even as many whites and the institutions they have historically controlled engage in storytelling and work that is aimed at liberation, the realities of the layers and layers of habituation that tell the embodied stories of racialized harm may be used to blame and judge those who have been most deeply harmed. These signs of ravaged generations become ways to justify continued cultural estrangement and even white mystification around the whence of many of our society's social challenges. This white denial is both stealthy and tenacious and bears itself out in a staggering amount of data about how whites tend to understand the status of equity and fairness in the United States.

18. Alexander, *Trauma,* 15–30. The full list of themes in the master narrative includes identifying the nature of pain, the nature of victims, the relation of victims to wider audiences, and attribution of responsibility.

Most whites assume that systems in this country are accessible and fair to people of all races.[19] Even whites who may have a more critical awareness of things like higher conviction rates for people of color in our judicial system, higher rates of poverty for people of color, and "achievement gap" data often have trouble understanding how to connect these dynamics to racism, and in particular to white privilege. All the while, racism and white privilege continue to erode and diminish communities, relationships, and possibilities for change. The effects of racism permeate everything from the rates of disease and infant mortality (even when data takes into account economic and education levels), to wealth, to financing and housing patterns, to the differences in frequency and method of discipline used with white schoolkids and those of color, to patterns of incarceration, to the ways we embody faith practices.[20]

The wounds of racism are and have been experienced quite consciously as trauma by people of color even as they continue to have profound unconscious and embodied effects. The necessary function of cultural representation and structures to foreground and define the trauma surfaces here, especially as the public representation of this collective suffering has changed over the years.[21] We can trace these changes from explicit denial in white narratives justifying slavery, to the framing of racial trauma via civil rights discourse, to the more recent narrative of colorblindness. The "not-knowing" that attends trauma takes hold in unique and particular ways and is, therefore, also profoundly shaped by cultural context.

19. Tim Wise's book *Colorblind* outlines many studies that indicate these patterns of white denial. See in particular chapter 2, "The Trouble with Post-racial Liberalism."

20. Wise outlines several sources of data around all of these issues (except the ecclesial dynamics). His section titled "Racism, Discrimination, and Health Care" provides an overwhelming amount of information about the deep and persistent effects of racism on black and brown populations. He writes, "In the past several years more than a hundred studies have found a relationship between racial discrimination and negative physical health outcomes for people of color." Wise, *Colorblind,* 112–26, 116.

21. Alexander, *Trauma,* 6.