

UCC ROOTS

Remembering our History

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A German Reformed Leader with Many Gifts

As a young man, Henry Harbaugh worked as a carpenter, poet and teacher to earn money for college and seminary. He was largely self-taught, spending only a year in college and two in seminary. He loved learning and continued his education throughout his life, reading voraciously in both religious and secular subjects. This practice cultivated a deep pietism and creative innovative understandings of theological and social issues.

Born in Waynesboro, Pennsylvania in 1817, Harbaugh developed strong ties with the German Reformed Church. By the mid-19th century he had become the leading interpreter of Mercersburg theology—a theological movement seeking to expand appreciation for the incarnation, the sacraments, and the organic life of the church. He cared for others, speaking out against the evils of slavery, alcohol, poverty and injustice. He was a beloved pastor in Lancaster, Pennsylvania and later a professor at the Seminary of the German Reformed Church.



Harbaugh's hymn "Jesus, I Live for Thee" is still cherished by many people:

*Jesus, I live to Thee,
The Loveliest and Best;
My life in Thee, Thy life in me,
In Thy blest love I rest.*

*Jesus, I die to Thee,
Whenever death shall come;
To die in Thee is life to me,
With Thee I'm ever one!*

*Whether to live or die,
I know not which is best;
To live in Thee is bliss to me,
To die is endless rest.*

*Living or dying, Lord,
I ask but to be Thine;
My life in Thee, Thy life in me,
Makes Thee forever mine.*

Harbaugh started journals, preached, wrote poetry, taught students and published many scholarly and historical works about the Reformed Church. When he died in 1867, it was said that he was "the true ideal of a minister of the Gospel...seeking only to fulfill the work of Christ on earth."

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