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The New Mercersburg Review 50

The Mercersburg Society has been formed to uphold the concept of the Church as the Body of Christ, Evangelical, Reformed, Catholic, Apostolic, organic, developmental and connectional. It affirms the ecumenical Creeds as witnesses to its faith and the Eucharist as the liturgical act from which all other acts of worship and service emanate.

The Society pursues contemporary theology in the Church and the world within the context of Mercersburg Theology. In effecting its purpose the Society provides opportunities for fellowship and study for persons interested in Mercersburg Theology, sponsors and annual convocation, engages in the publication of articles and books, stimulates research and correspondence among scholars on topics of theology, liturgy, the Sacraments and ecumenism.
The **New Mercersburg Review** is designed to publish the proceedings of the annual convocation as well as other articles on the subjects pertinent to the aims and interests of the Society.

From the Editor

F. Christopher Anderson

The Spring 2014 issue of the NMR differs greatly from our last issue. The Fall 2013 issue could be classified as a small book on the subject of the Holy Spirit in Reformed worship. It was written by one person. In stark contrast this issue includes four differing genres, four differing authors and three differing subjects.

First of all we have a brief lecture on the history of The Craigville Theological Colloquy written by Llewellyn Parsons Smith. Reverend Dr. Smith was involved in the colloquies from the beginning. She has interviewed others who were there and she has researched the documents to leave us with a solid history of what happened.

Second, we have a letter from the former President and General Minister of the United Church of Christ, Avery Post, that adds to Rev. Smith's insights. I would be remiss if I did not emphasize that the colloquy continues and from July 14 through July 18th, the 2014 Colloquy is entitled *CREATION AS THEOLOGY AND ECOLOGY.* The special speakers will be Jim Antal and Jane Ellingwood. I highly recommend this for anyone interested in the topic.

Third, we have the conclusion of my D.Min. Dissertation that looks at twelve common hermeneutical assumptions that the church has used since the early church. It has not been published in any journal before.

The last genre we have here is that of a sermon. Rev. Dr. Kenneth Aldrich preached on the topic "Is Christ Divided?" at the 2012 Annual Mercersburg Society's Convocation.

Enjoy!

Letters to the Editor

Regarding Dr. Teresa Berger's "Glimpses of the Holy Spirit in Reformed Theology and Worship" that appeared in the Fall 2013 issue.

To the Editor,

"I have just finished reading the Berger essays. Not only do I agree with your words that they are "worth reading and preserving to read again," I hope they will find their way into many other hands as well."

Hugh Nevin

Dear Hugh,

After Teresa Berger gave her lectures I told her that publishing them in the journal would be like publishing a book on the subject. She dismissed the idea that they would make a book. I, who happen to both love to read and to write brief books or booklets, did not argue with her. But I would see these two lectures as a wonderful small book for Eerdmanns or some other similar publisher. It is such an honor for the NMR to have published them first! I do have extra copies available for those who did not get the issue.

F. Christopher Anderson

Commemoration of the Origin of the Craigville Theological Colloquies May 14 – 16, 1984

Rev. Dr. Llewellyn Parsons Smith
July 15, 2013
@ The Craigville Retreat Center

The Craigville Theological Colloquies have always been considered a MISSION. Ours is a mission to the churches. The first colloquy in 1984 came out of an ecclesiastical climate that was casting about for sound theology. Ferment was the word to describe what was going on. Who can put into words our core beliefs? Who can declare the importance of Christ as attested in scripture?

Notice that, at that time, several serious theological conversations were going on in New England, Pennsylvania and the Midwest. The energy in these working study groups coalesced. Why not get their members to come together and have one big conversation or colloquy. The groups behind the event are still represented here: Biblical-Theological-Liturgical group, The Mercersburg Society, Theological Table Talk. Another group, The Biblical Witness Fellowship was also gathering momentum at the time. Lets come together meet and greet, face and place concerns in the general conversation!

150 people were expected to gather. The first Craigville Theological Colloquy was dynamic, power-packed, geared up with high energy, and seen by the founders as the movement of the Holy Spirit.

The personalities that stirred the pot and designed the event were bold and vigorous. They were not afraid to debate fine points and argue the significance of nuance.

Back in 1957, the United Church of Christ was formed in the spirit of joining together all who named Christ as the head of the church. This has led to a grand span of belief and attitude under one tent. The ecumenical foundation of the U.C.C. offers a natural setting for friendly confrontation and debate.

But good feelings trumped theological depth many times. Some picked up the term "sloppy agape' to label the trend. A New Yorker cartoon showed two women sauntering down the aisle on the way out of church: "I do like the new rector, don't you? He's very flexible about God." By 1983, the times were ripe for setting some themes into words.

The fiftieth anniversary of the Barmen Declaration was an obvious occasion to make a statement. In May, 1934, Karl Barth and the German Confessional Church prayerfully put forth their document, declaring that "Jesus Christ, as he is attested for us in Holy Scripture, is the one Word of God which we have to hear and which we have to trust and obey in life and in death." [8:11] The United Church in the United States in 1984 was not the same as Hitler's Germany. Nevertheless, the impulse was vital to make firm and articulate our center in Christ and Scripture. Would our mission to stand strong on this rock turn out to be built on sand? Nobody could predict the next thirty years and the theological voices that would be speaking in the CraigvilleTabernacle.

What are the dimensions of the Mission of the Craigville Theological Colloquies? Gabriel Fackre and his wife Dorothy wrote an educational book called Christian Basics. Based on the Book of Acts, it outlines the four marks of a church in mission: *koinonia* - community, *leiturgia* – worship, *diakonia* - service, *kerygma* - proclamation.

Starting at the first colloquy, we have enjoyed the *koinonia*, a community of theologians, lay and clergy. We have worshiped together, *leitourgia*. We have empowered attendees to *diakonia*, service through the church. Our evangelical impulse has strengthened and weakened over the years. In former times, we put

together a written letter which was a composite of statements by small groups, edited to be one message, a theological mission statement. Now we can make use of our website to publish our witness. It is still *kerygma*, evangelical proclamation.

How did those marks of the church play out in early colloquy experience?

Not inconsequential was the *koinonia*. We came together as a community who shared a commitment to serious theological reflection. Friends enjoyed the company of fellow clergy and active church members, looking forward to seeing each other in subsequent years. We had lively conversation at meals, on the village roads going to and from meetings, in the ocean waist deep, in small groups and vigorous Plenary sessions. The Planning Committee enjoyed a *koinonia* like a mini colloquy. As pastors can find themselves in lonely situations, they appreciate the opportunity to be with colleagues at a colloquy. There is a quality of invitation. Gabe and Dot speak of being together as the Book of Acts describes the early church, accepting all manner of folk in a common life. We have always spoken of grass roots involvement, inviting anybody to contribute a paper, taking seriously the small group discussions, welcoming diverse viewpoints. The Holy Spirit lives in the midst of such a community.

Another mark of the church is its worship, *leiturgia*. Our worship at Craigville in the 1980's was no casual event. No preachers showed up in shorts. We were formally attentive to the robes, appurtenances and symbolic elements of worship. Singing together some well-loved hymns, praying together for our churches and their ministry, hearing distinguished sermons, celebrating Holy Communion with a clear epiclesis. These were vital components of our colloquies. Part of our mission was to strengthen worship life, *leiturgia*, in our home churches. Gabe and Dot make manifest the joy of worship, celebration and nurture, sharing the sacraments, when we always invoke the Spirit.

Diakonia is a broad term for ecclesial service. As Christian Basics puts it: "living out the love that cares for the basic needs of human beings." The calling of Craigville participants has been to labor in our congregational communities as teachers, deacons, moderators, committee members, as well as pastors. We have been called to serve. And our ministries have reached out beyond our congregations through justice ministries, peace ministries, ecology ministries and many other forms of service. The diaconal role introduced by St Paul has involved building up the church. Stewardship of all our resources, time, talent and treasure. Sharing and caring. Many of our churches have a Mission Committee to represent and lead them in this diaconal work of service.

The fourth mark of the church described in Acts and lifted up by Gabe and Dot is the evangelical one, *kerygma*. Clergy spend precious hours each week in preparing their sermons. These are intended to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ, to teach what it means for each one of us. We have been fed by the preaching heard at Craigville. Moreover, our ministers write letters to the local paper, articles for the church newsletter, and messages near and far about the Word of God. Mission means being resourceful in proclamation. And the hope we hold is that more and more people will be drawn in to the light that shines in our congregations by the mission of the Holy Spirit.

I collected some written comments by people who came to colloquies in the first ten years. These statements I used in my Doctor of Ministry project. I think you would be interested in the tenor of the comments.

The first: "Given the wide diversity of theology, political agenda, background, opinion and taste among people of the U.C.C., the Craigville Colloquies have been a place of remarkable mingling, sparring and adjusting. Reconciliation is the rediscovery of unity in Christ despite major differences among us." (Smith, Llewellyn Parsons, The Holy Spirit and the Craigville Theological Colloquies, Andover Newton Theological School, copyright 1995, page 53.)

"It could be argued that nobody was formally reconciled to an opposing viewpoint, but there were countless occasions when persons came together in dialogue that had never met one another before. The very coming together was a reconciliation of sorts. The climate was one of listening and engaging in discussion with ardor…All were stimulated by the task of setting down in as clear a statement as possible the journey of the conversation at the event." (Smith, Ibid, page 102)

"The nine Witness Statements have had – as the only people-produced (bubble-up) theological documents in the U.C.C. – stimulated (more by their existence than by their content) formal and informal U.C.C. conversations on the importance of serious theological reflection and decision-making in our church." (Smith, Ibid, page 49)

They were circulated as letters to our brothers and sisters in the United Church of Christ and the wider church. That they represent a consensus, on occasion unanimously voted, makes them of historical value and a source of guidance to the contemporary church, perhaps the Spirit's own work. One correspondent set down this thought: "The foundation 'Witness Statements' have provided a framework of understanding which came about through the work of the Spirit and points to the center line – Jesus Christ, the Word. The framework provides a foundation which draws from the past, informs the present, and moves the Church toward the future." (Smith, Ibid, page 50.)

I know we all are overflowing with gratitude to Gabe Fackre who has guided us all these years. The red geranium is to go to him and Dot. It has many buds and suggests the flame of the Holy Spirit.

UCC President Geoffrey Black, who is here tonight, will be interested in the support the colloquies received from the then President of the UCC Rev Dr Avery Post. Avery came to the first three colloquies and was a cordial presence. I have a greeting from him for this occasion. *(Editor's note: The letter that Avery wrote follows this article in the NMR you are holding.)*

I also would like to acknowledge others who piled on. Gabe sent letters to all the neighboring Conference Ministers, Daehler Hayes, John Shetler, Al Williams, Otto Summer, and Ben Griffin, as well as academic leaders and colleagues. I have correspondence with Fred Trost, Walter Brueggemann, Paul Crow and Jeffrey Gros. These can be read by others who know them.

Let us conclude by joining in singing the venerable song honoring Gabe:

God bless my colloquies
Craigville's my place!
Where the crows call,
And the gulls glide,
And the swans sail the sweet lily lakes.
From the marshland
To the coastland,
To the woodland, robed in vines,
God bless my colloquies,
My special space…
My skunk and bunnie land,
My special space.

Greetings from the Former President & General Minister of the UCC to the 30th Craigville Theological Colloquy

Avery Post

Read to those gathered on the evening of July 13th, 2013.

As you gather for the thirtieth meeting of the Craigville Colloquy, I am pleased to greet you, and to wish for you a most valuable colloquy on the critical theme of Mission. During my years as the Conference Minister of the Massachusetts Conference, I became well acquainted with the Craigville Center as one of the Conference's ministries. Indeed I have long stories to tell about Craigville's development, improvement and staffing. Moving on to become President of the United Church, I felt Craigville lingering with me as a special place and ministry, as it does for every participant and visitor. In the early 1980s, the Executive Council of the UCC was hard hit by a letter from 25 academic and parish based theologians in the church with a demand for the church's leadership to engage in more disciplined and responsible theological work to which would accompany and provide a deeper basis for the church's lively prophetic ministries. The officers and the Council responded with gratitude, sharpened intentions, a defined common effort, and a conscious covenant with the teachers of the church. In retrospect, it was a very good and consequential moment in the life of the UCC.

It was in this era in the life of the United Church of Christ, in the nineteen eighties, that the Craigville Colloquy was born as a new form of theological inquiry within the church. It was born to be a Colloquy and neither a lobby with a particular perspective nor a

program within church structures, but rather a serious deep-running conversation of lay persons and ministers about our theological and ethical roots as the UCC lives its calling in the world. Over thirty years the Colloquy has functioned as a catalyst, enabling, resourcing and cohering other centers of renewal in the life of the church. It has functioned as a mentor and model for introducing faith and theological exploration in the local churches over a long generation.

Privileged to be part of the early planning and to be in attendance at the first Colloquy, I join all of you in thanksgiving for the Colloquy's founders, chiefly, of course, Gabe and Dot Fackre and a holy circle of friends and creative leaders, among them Herb Davis, Lelly Smith, Fred Trost, Willis Elliott and many more. Theirs was the brilliance of the concept that survives and now endures. Theirs too was a marketing brilliance to hold Colloquy meetings on irresistible Cape Cod with accessibility to one of the country's great beaches.

12 Common Hermeneutic Assumptions in the Evangelical and Catholic Tradition of Augustine, Chrysostom, Bernard, Calvin & Barth

Rev. Dr. F. Christopher Anderson

"However much of rubbish the Reformation found occasion to remove,
It was still compelled to do homage to the main body
Of the Roman thought as orthodox and right..."
John Williamson Nevin[1]

"Actually, of course, there is no plain sense of scripture, and they (Protestants) were basing their tradition on the early fathers of the Church much more than they knew."
Ronald A. Knox[2]

"There are weighty reasons which may have led...the ancient church to form and construct these brief formulas of confession...according to which every doctrine and interpretation of Scripture might be tried."
Zacharias Ursinus[3]

"Readiness to learn from the experience of others, above all from of old, is especially characteristic of prudence, since one man alone can't sufficiently consider all the infinite variety of possible action. We should attend to tradition carefully, constantly, and respectfully, without lazy neglect or proud disdain." [4]

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1 Charles Yrigoyen and George H. Bricker, ed. Catholic and Reformed: Selected Writings of John Williamson Nevin (The Pickwick Press, Pittsburgh, PA, 1978) pp. 226 & 7.

2 Ronald A. Knox In Soft Garments (Image Books, Garden City, NY, 1964) p. 117.

3 Zacharias Ursinus, trans. G. W. Willard, The Commentary of Dr. Zacharias Ursinus on the Heidelberg Catechism (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1956) p. 118.

4 St. Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologiae: A Concise Translation, ed. by

St. Thomas Aquinas

"Mr. Taylor's standpoint is completely subjective.....With the Bible in hand, he finds it a most easy and reasonable thing to rule out of court the universal voice of the church, from the second century if need be to the sixteenth, wherever it refuses to chime in with his own mind."[5]
John Williamson Nevin

"Tradition means giving votes to the most obscure of all classes, our ancestors. It is the democracy of the dead. Tradition refuses to submit to the small and arrogant oligarchy of those who merely happen to be walking about."[6]
G.K. Chesterton

"'Why damn it -- it's *medieval*,' I exclaimed; for I still had all the chronological snobbery of my period and used the names of earlier periods as terms of abuse."[7]
C.S. Lewis

I did not grow up in the Mercersburg tradition. I was baptized in The Immaculate Conception Roman Catholic Church of Keeseville, New York. I was confirmed and I even got the Bishop's religion award at my eight grade graduation. I had Sisters and then Brothers for a total of twelve years of Roman Catholic parochial school. I went to a secular state university where I was converted at the tail end of the Jesus Movement in 1971.

My pilgrimage took me from being a Jesus Freak, to being a fundamentalist, to being a pentecostal, to being a follower of

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Timothy McDermott (Westminster, Maryland, Christian Classics, 1989), 379.

5 John Williamson Nevin, Catholic and Reformed: Selected Writings of John Williamson Nevin, ed. by Charles Yrigoyen, Jr. and George H. Bricker, (Pittsburgh, The Pickwick Press, 1978), 284 & 285.

6 G. K. Chesterton, Orthodoxy (Garden City, New York, Image Books, 1959), 48.

7 C.S. Lewis, Surprised By Joy: The Shape of My Early Life (London, Fontana Book, 1959), 166.

Charles G. Finney. It led me into holiness doctrines, to starting a house church, to being a member of an evangelical group that eventually morphed into a cult. I then went to Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. In 1981 I was ordained in the UCC. Fifteen years later I started my my D.Min at Lancaster Theological Seminary. Eventually I found that I had served as a full time pastor in four UCC churches for 30 years.

Three books helped me during the years before I was ordained. They led me to trust that there was a unity in the church of Jesus Christ that I had had difficulty seeing.. The first book was (unknown to me at the time) a book of Mercersburg Theology. It was Philip Scaff's volume on the Swiss Reformation. It helped me see Calvin in a positive light. Ronald Knox's book *Enthusiasm* helped me identify with the dangers of "ultra supernaturalism," perfectionism and sectarianism. Finally, Thomas S. Kepler's book, *An Anthology of Devotional Literature*, helped me to see the unity of the faith in almost 2000 years of devotional literature.

Yet what really solidified me theologically was my D.Min studies at LTS with Lee Barrett, Anne Thayer and John B. Payne. These years of study helped me to see that there has been an surprising consistency in how Christians have interpreted scripture for almost two thousand years. My dissertation contains nine

chapters but I am merely going to give you the important results of the study that are found in Chapter VII.

I choose four periods of time that are roughly separated by 500 years each. I choose five interpreters to represent these times. Augustine and Chrysostom for the early church, Bernard of Clairvaux for the Middle Ages, John Calvin for the Reformation period and Karl Barth for the 20th century. These not only represented great theologians but they encompassed The Eastern Orthodox Church, The Roman Catholic Church, the Protestant Reformation and probably the greatest theologian of the 20th century. My study shows that they can be considered a particular Evangelical and Catholic Tradition.

Though this study has shown that there are great differences within this particular Evangelical and Catholic Tradition it also showed me that there are certain consistent insights into hermeneutics. This is indeed surprising since they come from such differing ages. Though the School of Alexandria and the School of Antioch do have their disagreements there is more that they hold in common than that which separates them. Many of these things they hold in common are in direct contrast to certain prevalent views. The fact that these insights have lasted through the Patristic Age, the Medieval Age, the Reformation Age and the Modern Age gives

us confidence that they are worth keeping as we move into the Third Millenium.

Though this work has stressed the study of one tradition it is clear that these hermeneutical assumptions are not the sole property of one tradition. It would be sectarian for The Evangelical and Catholic Tradition to claim sole ownership these points in opposition to the two other catholic streams of the church, that is the Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church. (It should be clear that the five interpreters from the four differing periods of the church that I have chosen include interpreters from all three of the main Christian traditions that I have mentioned above. This was done consciously.) Discussion of this would open up an even larger area of research that would have to unmask certain misconceptions on all sides of the question. It is hoped that making these simple points clear could in some small way be part of an answer to the High Priestly Prayer in John 17:21 that "they all may be one". This involves real ecumenism because it involves real theology.

I. The Bible is both an Historical Book and a Spiritual Book.

At first this may seem to be obvious but the statement assumes that the Augustinian and therefore medieval idea that there are at least two senses of scripture in certain texts is true. Simply put the evidence shows that de Lubac is correct. Christian tradition has, on the whole, assumed that there is both a literal or historical meaning of scripture and that at certain times there is also a spiritual reading. Chrysostom's criteria for them would be if they are mentioned in the Bible itself whereas Bernard and Augustine's criteria would be much larger.

It is obvious that the School of Alexandria has strongly believed this. The question was did the School of Antioch, that is Chrysostom, and Calvin and Barth believe this. Though Chrysostom was against the use of the Allegorical Method he did use typologies and did see a spiritual meaning in a text if there was New Testament warrant for it. Chrysostom had no problem seeing the cross in Old Testament texts. It is also clear that most of his work was interpreting the New Testament and not the Old Testament.

In looking at Calvin's interpretation of Isaiah 11 we see that he even used the term "spiritual meaning" in interpreting it. In his work on Psalm 72 we see that he interprets it in a spiritual manner because there is a word that speaks of the King's eternal reign that could only be fulfilled in Christ. Calvin begins his commentary on Psalm 72 saying something that shows that he believes in both the historical or literal sense and the spiritual sense of scripture. In remembering how he handled Isaiah 11 we are beginning to see a pattern. He writes, "While David...recommended to God his son, ...he doubtless edited to the Church a common form of prayer..."[8]. How could someone whom we see as an heir to the School of Antioch believe that this psalm is about Christ and Solomon and not Solomon alone? Calvin does this by referring to Psalm 132:11 & 12 which use the word "forevermore" in relation to the reign of his successors. Since he sees Christ as springing "...forth from the withered stock of Jesse"[9] Calvin states that "...no such stability as is indicated in that passage is to be found in the successors of David, until we get to Christ."[10] Here we again see Calvin's use of two senses of scripture. Some might argue that Calvin only does this when the historical meaning of the text does not fulfill all the

8 Calvin Calvin's Commentaries Volume V p. 101.
9 Calvin Calvin's Commentaries Volume V p. 103.
10 Calvin Calvin's Commentaries Volume V p. 102.

meaning of the text. This is true but we have even seen Calvin use the term "spiritual meaning" in his work on Isaiah 11.

Since Barth is the only Post-Critical interpreter we even have a clearer statement on this issue from him. He writes "However, in the course of time historical criticism has assumed exaggerated importance, so that there is a tendency to identify the real meaning of Scripture with its historical significance."[11] Barth is saying this assumption is wrong. One sees this clearly in reading how these interpreters interpreted the psalms. Again Barth is not saying the historical-critical method should not exist but merely that it should be critical of itself.

II. The New Testament Interprets the Old Testament

This second point must be seen in the light of the first point. One of today's problems is the assumption that there is only one reading of scripture. The first point shows us that for this tradition this is not always the case. There can be a literal and a spiritual reading of a text. One of the best examples of this in the New Testament itself is when St. Paul interprets the ox in Deuteronomy

11 Karl Barth, trans. James S. Stewart, Prayer and Preaching (SCM Book Club, Naperville, Ill, 1964), p. 102.

25:4 to represent the minister of the gospel in I Corinthians 9:9. There are clearly two meanings of the text given here.

The point here is that this Evangelical and Catholic tradition did not have a problem holding to two meanings of the text in certain texts. Therefore today we may encourage the Old Testament scholar to discover what the text meant while at the same time believing in the New Testament interpretation of the text. Simply put this only becomes a problem when one of the two groups does not allow for the other interpretation. The Christian Systematic Theologian should allow for the literal interpretation by the Old Testament Scholar and the Christian Old Testament Scholar should allow for the interpretation of the Christian Systematic Theologian. As my high school French teacher used to say, "Bode are good". It might be asked are these fair categorizations? Lee Barrett stated that students in seminary sense an "institutional disconnect between theological studies and biblical studies" based on this very issue of the differences in how they interpret scripture.[12]

This second point is obvious in all of the four periods of history. Barth's hermeneutic is merely a reflection of his continuing in this Evangelical and Catholic tradition. He writes "The Old Testament and New Testament are related to one another as

[12] Lee Barrett, class notes from 2-27-2003.

prophecy to its fulfillment, and the Old Testament should always be regarded in this light."[13] Augustine, Chrysostom, Bernard and Calvin all assume this as we have seen in their interpretations.

III. Human Blindness is Over Come By The Light of Faith and Scripture

David Steinmetz writes concerning Calvin: "Blindness is now an acute astigmatism that can be corrected by the light of faith and the spectacles of scripture."[14] This is not only true of Calvin obviously of all in the Augustinian tradition. This insight explains Bernard's struggles with Abelard and Barth's struggle against Natural Theology and Augustine's struggle against Pelagianism. It was not that these interpreters were against reason. They merely saw that human reason had its limits because it was effected by the fall. The belief that one could understand theology merely by human reason without grace or the gift of the scriptures has consistently been seen as a form of Pelagianism.

Some might try to make an argument that Chrysostom

[13] Karl Barth, trans. James S. Stewart, Prayer and Preaching (SCM Book Club, Naperville, Ill, 1964), p. 93.

[14] David C. Steinmetz, Calvin in Context (New York, Oxford Press, 1995), p. 31.

would not be represented by this common hermeneutic insight. This is because he does not stand in the Augustinian tradition after Augustine had settled the Pelagian Controversy. I would argue that though this is true and things are not as clear as they would be if Chrysostom had lived after the Pelagian Controversy, he still holds this common insight. The easiest ways to argue this is to go back to his theory of accommodation. The premise to this hermeneutical insight is twofold. One that humanity is finite and two that humanity has been effected by sin. Therefore Chrysostom also would hold to belief that human blindness is over come by the light of faith and scripture.

It must also be emphasized that all five interpreters would believe that one does not interpret the scriptures on one's own but with the help of the Holy Spirit who teaches us.

IV. The Bible is the Church's Book and Therefore We are Always in Dialogue

Chapter II has shown that both the conservative side and the liberal side have elements from the Enlightenment that give them the hope of jumping two thousand years of interpretation in order to get the real meaning. Certain conservatives believe that all they

need is the Bible and the Holy Spirit to interpret the Scriptures. They think this is what Luther meant by "sola scriptura". Certain liberals who solely use the historical-critical method demean those who came before them and did not have this method. They therefore want to jump the two thousand years and merely look at the author's original intent.

This Evangelical and Catholic tradition believes Christ's promise to be with the church in every age. Therefore one must be in dialogue with what was taught in every age. This dialogue is not easy. First of all pastors do not have a lot of time to spend reading all the interpreters of scripture in history. Designating a tradition as this work has done does give some guidance. These five interpreters are worth reading merely because they do form this tradition.

It is clear from Bernard, Calvin and Barth that though they all deeply respect those who have gone before them that they were not slavish followers of those they stood upon. This point should not be used to say that there is never any progress in theology or in interpretation but that there must be real dialogue with real interpreters and not "straw people". This brings up the issue of what is explicit or implicit in scripture and the development of such doctrines as the Trinity, the Person and Nature of Christ and the Doctrine of Justification.

Again Barth is important here. He thoughtfully named his great work Church Dogmatics and one need only read these volumes to be brought into the presence of those interpreters that had gone before him. Those who would try to say that Calvin interpreted scripture without a dialogue with those who had gone before him should take time to read David Steinmetz wonderful book, Calvin in Context.[15] Calvin tried to be lucid and brief and therefore did not always mention names and history.

V. Certain Texts Are More Important Than Other Texts

I have come to conclude that Augustine's most overlooked book is the short book on hermeneutics, Christian Doctrine. He makes it very clear that one should have a conscious lens to view scripture when one reads it. His simplest lens is his use of Christ's Two Great Commandments. He writes that if anyone "...puts such an interpretation upon them (the scriptures) as does not tend to build up this twofold love of God and our neighbor, does not yet understand them as he ought."[16]

In the last fifty years the term "canon within the canon" has been used as a derogatory comment that is often aimed at someone else's interpretation of scripture. The truth is that this Evangelical and Catholic tradition did see that certain parts of the scripture are more important than other portions. I think any interpreter who is honest and self-aware does also. Here we see that Augustine saw The Two Great Commandments as more important that other texts. Obviously Luther saw Galatians as more important than James and Calvin saw Romans as being more important than Jude. It is interesting that in Luke 4 portrays Jesus as answering the devil's use of certain scriptures with other scriptures.

This Evangelical and Catholic tradition does not see the Bible as a level playing field. The Bible is seen as a large, rich collection of sixty-six books with great mountain peaks, valleys, jungles and plains. One stands in good company with those who see the Two Great Commandments as being more important than certain ceremonial laws in Leviticus. Yet the next two points will show that even these ceremonial laws can be used as illustrations when used in conjunctions with other, more plain texts from the New Testament or theological insights from Church history.

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15 David C. Steinmetz, Calvin in Context (New York, Oxford Press, 1995), p. 73 & 74.

16 Augustine, NPNF First Series Volume II, p. 533.

VI. Plainer Texts Interpret the More Obscure Texts

The last point leads to a something that Augustine wrote about in Christian Doctrine. "Now from the places where the sense in which they are used is more manifest we must gather the sense in which they are to be understood in obscure passages."[17] Not only are certain passages more important than others in certain situations but those that are plain in their meaning should interpret those that are more obscure.

Bernard is a perfect example of this. I have argued that he used the Song of Songs as a hat rack for his theology of love. His work is not an exegesis of obscure verses but a place where he uses plain verses to explain his theology while using the framework of a book about love.

VII. Christians Should Consciously Interpret With A Rule of Faith

One thing modern hermeneutics had shown us is that every interpreter has a point of view. Our usual problem is that we are not aware of our own point of view.

17 Augustine, NPNF First Series Volume II, p. 566.

The Rule of Faith has had two meanings historically. One meaning would be the very technical meaning of the specific beliefs that were built up in the Roman Catholic Church. This form of the rule of faith would be synonymous with Roman Catholic doctrine. The second meaning refers to the basic theology of one's particular tradition. That is if one is committed to the particular tradition I have been pointing out then one would hold to the ecumenical creeds, the basic insights of the protestant reformers and the unity of the universal church.

Calvin uses the Chalcedon Definition to better understand Isaiah 11. Much of Barth's wondrous work is also based on this definition. Therefore they had a "rule of faith" from which they interpreted scripture. This is obviously true of Augustine and Bernard but it is also true of Chrysostom. He came to the text with a theology that he believed. We see this in Chrysostom in his discussion of "virgin" in Matthew 1:18-25. Chrysostom writes "For reading does not suffice unless knowledge also be added to it. Even as the eunich of Candace read, but until one came who instructed him in the meaning of what he was reading he derived no great benefit from it."[18] We all need help understanding texts. That is why God gave teachers to the church.

18 Chrysostom, NPNF Volume IX, p. 201.

In modern language we might say that one does not have to "reinvent the wheel" every time one comes to a text. One has a theology when one comes to a text. We see that Calvin wrote The Institutes to give Reformed Christians help in interpreting scripture. The Church has never thought that a Christian would approach interpreting the scriptures as if one was not a Christian or as if one were value neutral.

Zacharias Ursinus, the main author of the Heidelberg Catechism, points out that there are three areas that are necessary for the study of theology. He titles these "catechetical instruction", "the Common Places" and "diligent study of the Scriptures".[19] In speaking of the third he writes "To attain this, the former two methods are to be studied, that we may well be prepared for the reading, understanding and exposition of the holy Scriptures."[20] The point is that the Reformed Tradition, as a part of the Augustine Tradition, never said that *"sola scriptura"* meant one could interpret the Bible without a rule of faith. This is continues to be a misunderstanding of history and Evangelical and Catholic Theology.

[19] Zacharias Ursinus, trans. G. W. Williard, Commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1956) pp. 9 & 10.
[20] Zacharias Ursinus, trans. G. W. Williard, Commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1956) p. 10.

In conclusion we should be reminded that for Augustine points # VII (Christians Should Consciously Interpret With A Rule of Faith) and # VI (Plainer Texts Interpret the More Obscure Texts) were deeply related. He wrote concerning how the interpreter looks at scripture; "...let the reader consult the rule of faith which he has gathered from the plainer passages of Scripture".[21] This relationship comes out when one realizes that his book on hermeneutics is called Christian Doctrine.

VIII. There are Technical Skills Involved in Interpretation

Book II in Augustine's Christian Doctrine speaks very plainly to this issue. There is a certain tension that this point has with point # III (Human Blindness is Over Come By The Light of Faith and Scripture). This Evangelical and Catholic tradition has always said that both the spiritual and the technical are important in interpreting scripture. Today most of the books we see on interpretation emphasize the technical side.

Historically Calvin and Barth shine in this combination. They are both technical and spiritual. Augustine, Chrysostom and Bernard had limitations in not knowing Hebrew. Old Testament

[21] Augustine, NPNF First Series Volume II, p. 557.

Scholars are important for this Evangelical and Catholic tradition. Yet everyone has some technical limitations. Augustine's great theological mind helped him where his limitations hurt his work. Certain "preunderstandings" help many differing groups of people who did not have many technical skills arrive at many very helpful insights into the scriptures as the church has seen in Latin American church communities.

This issue led The Reformed Church to stress a learned ministry. Yet the need for a balance between the spiritual and the technical was always seen to be important. This means that those who interpret scripture should be students of the very large area of language and communication arts.

IX. Interpretation Should Lead to Application

This point has much in common with # IV (The Bible is The Church's Book and Therefore We Are Always in Dialogue). The Bible is the church's book. It is used in worship and is the basis of the various teaching ministries in the church. When one reads any of these five interpreters one sees that they are trying to find an application of the scriptures for the church.

Chrysostom consistently used the phrase "Let us" to make

these applications clear. He did this especially near the end of his sermons. Barth disagreed only about where to place the application. He insisted that the application should come during the explanation of the appropriate verse in a verse by verse expository style sermon.[22] Yet both emphasized application.

The point for all of these interpreters was that they preached the word to the church and the preaching was meant to effect those who heard the word. Their interpretations were never meant to be merely academic.

X. God Accommodates to Our Limitations in Scripture

We have seen that this particular insight was emphasized most strongly in Chrysostom and then in Calvin. They wrote consciously and consistently on this topic, as we have seen in Chapter V. Some might find this point somewhat weaker than the other points in this list. Yet I believe it is represented in all five of the interpreters. They all assumed that the Triune God was transcendent and beyond our comprehension. They all believed that humans were finite and sinful. These presuppositions lead to what

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22 Karl Barth, trans. James S. Stewart, Prayer and Preaching (SCM Book Club, Naperville, Ill, 1964), p. 112 & 113.

Chrysostom and Calvin made plain in their hermeneutics. God speaks to us in a manner that relates to our situation.

XI. We Do Not Control the Bible

Barth states this point succinctly. "The sacred text is not to be treated according to our own desires; it must be in command; it is above us and we are its servants."[23] This tradition views Thomas Jefferson's attempt to take a scissors to the scriptures and remove the miracles to be mistake. This tradition therefore has been very much against Marcion's small canon. Yes, we have problems with many texts but we have accepted a canon. The Bible is a large collection of books that the church has received as a gift. Bernard chanted the psalms through weekly. Chrysostom and Calvin preached straight through books of the Bible. Augustine's favorite work was his commentary on the psalms. Barth sought to return the church to this great fountain. We, like our Jewish bothers and sisters, are people of the book.

It might be asked "Doesn't point V allow that certain parts of the Bible control other parts of the Bible?" The answer to that is

[23] Karl Barth, trans. James S. Stewart, Prayer and Preaching (SCM Book Club, Naperville, Ill, 1964), p. 99.

"Yes and No". Yes certain portions of the Bible are more important than other portions but this does not allow us to cut out portions of the scriptures that give our theologies problems. We are forced to live with many layers of meaning that we either do not understand or remain paradoxes. This tradition, as many others, has accepted a canon.

XII. In the End The Bible is Seen Through the Person of Christ

Calvin, in commenting on John 5:39 states "First, then we ought to believe that Christ cannot be properly known in any other way than from *the Scriptures;* and if it be so, it follows that we ought to read *the Scriptures* with the express design of finding Christ in them."[24] This could be seen as part of the rule of faith but the Christocentric nature of this tradition could be missed if that was done.

This is clearly seen in the work of Augustine and Bernard. Chrysostom, Calvin and Barth would argue that the School of Alexandria's use of the Allegorical Method often went too far in trying to see Christ in scripture. But this Evangelical and Catholic

[24] Calvin, Calvin's Commentaries Volume XVII , p. 218. (second part of the volume)

tradition looks to the scriptures to see Christ. Chrysostom may be the most conservative on this issue but if the New Testament says something is a type of Christ or is prophesied concerning Christ that is the way he sees it. We can see this Christo-centric approach when Chrysostom comments on Matthew 11:2-11. It is also seen when he states that the Old Testament prophets foresaw "...cross, and the cause of the cross and that which was effected by it, and the burial and the resurrection, and the ascension, and the betrayal and the trial, and described them all with accuracy."[25] Barth writes, "The Old Testament, though a completely Jewish book, none the less refers to Christ."[26] He goes so far as to write "...the Church adapted the Old Testament because of Christ."[27]

This tradition worships the Triune God as revealed in the person of Jesus Christ. Barth is not an oddity in his Christo-centric perspective. He is clearly part of a tradition. Christ is given priority over the Bible so that we worship Christ and not the Bible. As Luther said, the scriptures are the cradle in which we find Christ.

These twelve common insights must be seen as massively important. Yet one must admit that they do not solve all of our problems in interpretation. What they do is to help us meet in the

25 Chrysostom, NPNF Volume IX, p. 203.
26 Barth, Prayer and Preaching p. 94.
27 Barth, Prayer and Preaching p. 94.

same ballpark and agree on some basic rules of the game such as what is fair or foul and what constitutes a home run. The elimination of them in our interpretation of scripture should be shown to be what it is, at minimum, stepping outside of this Evangelical and Catholic tradition.

IS CHRIST DIVIDED?

1 Corinthians 1:13

Rev. Dr. Kenneth Aldrich preached this sermon at the 2012 Mercersburg Society's Annual Convocation. Jume 5, 2012 at Lancaster Theological Seminary.

Undoubtedly we would all answer, "No!" in theory, but in practice we often act as if the answer were, "Yes!" Most of us have a certain reluctance about intentionally stepping out of our denominational comfort zones to embrace those with whose traditions we are not familiar, particularly those whose traditions might appear to us as exotic or strange.

It is clear to me, however, and, I hope, to you as well, that God wants us personally and corporately to reach out to sisters and brothers in Christ whose traditions, practices and worship may seem quite different from our own. Only in this way can we really know the fullness of Christ and begin to actualize the undergirding unity of his church.

May I share with you an example of one of the ways God made this clear to me? A while back, my dentist, who had been born in Egypt, invited me to the consecration of his new church, St. Mina's in Holmdel, New Jersey. I had never been to a Coptic Church before, but somewhere early in my theological formation, I had been enjoined to regard the Copts as somewhat theologically suspect because they had the obstinate audacity to continue to reject the Chalcedonian definition in favor of Monophysitism!

Notwithstanding my long held theological prejudice and the fact that much of St. Mina's general ambience, liturgy, music and congregational demeanor did seem strange and exotic to my Anglican eyes and ears, I felt led to do two things: (1) focus upon those things that did appear familiar – e.g., the cross above the altar and the basic shape of the liturgy as best I could follow it; and (2)

accept the dissimilarities as newly experienced facets of Christian tradition from which I might learn something to enrich my own understanding of what it meant to follow Jesus.

A short time prior to the dedicatory service, the tragedy September 11th occurred. Newspapers and television channels were showing photos of Osama bin Laden and his principal henchmen, announcing that our intelligence agencies were diligently trying to find their whereabouts. All this went through my mind as I watched the Coptic bishop as he was preaching a rather lengthy sermon in Arabic. The bishop had a very Middle Eastern physiognomy and a tangled black beard flicked with grey; and, for a moment I fantasized that this just might be Osama bin Laden masquerading as a Coptic bishop! But then the bishop switched to English and I could understand his message which did not sound as all like that of bin Laden. Instead, he spoke of the saving love of Jesus, the Prince of Peace, and I immediately recognized him as a brother in faith from whom I had much to learn.

I am still a "dyophysite" or whatever one calls an adherent of the Chalcedonian definition: eis hen prosopon kai mian hypostasin en dyo physesin (that two natures – the human and the divine – are hypostatically united in one person – Jesus Christ), however, I no longer look with theological suspicion upon those ancient Christian communities who prefer to express the mystery of the Incarnation in a different way.

Historical reflection suggests that opposition to Chalcedon may have had as much or more to do with ethnic and cultural considerations than theological ones. Egyptian, Aramaic and Armenian Christians pushed back against what they perceived as Byzantine cultural and theological imperialism. More and more, we are recognizing how much the Oriental Orthodox, as these churches call themselves, have to teach us about such things as perseverance under adversity and the respect and appreciation of early Christian spirituality – as together with them we move toward a greater unity within the Body of Christ.

Sometime prior to getting to appreciate the faith of our sisters and brothers in the ancient Oriental churches, I was led by my wife, Sharon, to connect with another group of Christians whom I had previously regarded as strange and exotic; the Charismatics and Pentecostals. They opened me up to a new awareness of the person and work of God the Holy Spirit and delivered me from "functional Binitarianism" (by "functional Binitarianism" I mean operating with some understanding of the Father and of the Son but with hardly a clue about the Holy Ghost.) I am profoundly grateful to my Pentecostal sisters and brothers for enabling me to appreciate a full blown Trinitarianism experientially instead of just theoretically.

Sometime later in my life, the Spirit led me into discovering and esteeming yet another strange and exotic group – the Mercersburg Society.

The late Fr. Wayne Smith, my colleague in the Episcopal Diocese of New Jersey, introduced me to Mercersburg. Wayne's spirituality was formed and nurtured in the E. and R. Church and in this very seminary. Although he later became an Episcopalian, his theology was always grounded in Mercersburg. He told me I would like it and he was right. The more I get into the Mercersburg tradition, the more I recognize it as a God-given building block to greater unity and self understanding among Christians of all sorts and conditions.

Among the historic denominations interest in ecumenism – the quest to realize oneness in Christ – has largely been eclipsed by programs of social advocacy. One cannot help but wonder in this regard how any Christian witness to God's peace, God's justice and God's reign can appear credible to the world if we fail to address and earnestly strive to overcome the widespread alienation within our own family. We must listen respectfully to one another, if we expect the world to listen to us!

We are all familiar with the petition from Jesus' high priestly prayer in John 17 that his disciples might all be one in him that

world might indeed believe that God has sent him. It is my devout conviction that a yearning for corporate unity in Christ is directly and intimately connected to personal union with Christ. The two are inseparable.

Authentic Christian life is meant to be incarnational rather than something merely assented to intellectually. It is transformationally experienced because it is grounded in and nourished by a living relationship with an incarnate Savior in an organic fellowship of believers we call the church.

Envisage the church as a Christocentric sphere or circle with each of us at different points somewhere on the circumference looking to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith – who is smack dab in the middle. It follows that as we move closer to the center, that is the closer to Christ, the closer we get to one another. We must recognize this profound truth if we are to progress ecumenically.

By virtue of our union with Christ as members of his mystical body, the church, we are already inseparably united in and through Christ, bound together in our baptismal covenant one with another. While this underlying, pervasive unity may not be fully and perfectly realized until the Last Day; it is, nevertheless, our privilege and responsibility to pursue it in the here and now. Discovering and celebrating the richness and diversity present within the Body of Christ is a truly joyful experience to which and in which the Spirit of God calls each of us to participate.

Overcoming the pervasive estrangement that continues to plague the church requires patient, persistent and empathetic dialogue among Christians of different persuasions. No fruitful ecumenical dialogue can take place if the participants imagine that they have nothing further to learn from one another. In any endeavor to recognize more clearly or realize more fully the mystical unity inherent with the Body of Christ, we must be open to the possibilities of discerning facets and dimensions of Christian truth, perhaps new to us, but long familiar to those with whom we are in dialogue. The Body of Christ is far deeper, fuller, richer and more

comprehensive than any of our own particular traditions – however valuable and spiritually satisfying the latter may be.

One of the ways Christians can and should facilitate the celebration of the intrinsic unity that both undergirds and transcends our apparent differences is to recognize that not every issue facing the church during our earthly pilgrimage necessarily requires an either/or resolution.

For example, it seems clear to me that either Jesus is Lord of all or he is not really Lord at all. But many other Christian truths are best understood in terms of both/and. We affirm that our God is both a unity and a trinity; Christ is both human and divine, the Church is both catholic and evangelical. Indeed, spiritual paradox appears throughout the whole of Scripture. In the word of the Apostle's self-description in 2nd Corinthians "we are sorrowful yet always rejoicing, poor yet making many rich, as having nothing yet possessing all things." The ecumenical enterprise necessitates our developing a respectful appreciation of the perspectives and piety present in other traditions without discounting our own.

Not many miles from this very chapel where we are gathered, in the year 1767, Martin Boehm, a Mennonite farmer-preacher with little or no formal education but with a great sense of Christian vocation was proclaiming the Gospel with great fervor and power to a group gathered in a barn for spiritual revival – when from the crowd emerged a learned, seminary educated pastor of the German Reformed Church in York, the Rev. Philip Otterbein. He warmly embraced the Mennonite evangelist and exclaimed, "Wir sint Brueder!" ("We are brothers!") From this remarkable recognition of spiritual kinship, the United Brethren arose; they, in turn, merged with "Albright's People" to become the E.U.B. Church, and, ultimately, a component of today's United Methodists. (I am sad to say, parenthetically, that Nevin had a rather uncharitable view of "Albright's People"; but I trust he corrected it later, when he discovered a large delegation of them present in the throne room of Heaven.)

So much of the church in our own time seems estranged and isolated, powerless and paralyzed. Are we content with things the way they are or do we believe that Christ desires something much better for his people?

Here we are, assembled together in this beautiful and inspiring house of worship. We represent many different traditions within the Christian family. God has gifted each of us differently, but all of us richly; and God's gifts are meant to be shared, not hoarded! Challenged and encouraged by the Spirit of the Living God, are we ready, willing and able – like Otterbein and Boehm of old – to reach boldly across the entrenched barriers, preferences and prejudices that would divide us and to embrace one another as sisters and brothers in Christ?

The Body of Christ is anointed to preach good news to the poor, to heal the broken hearted, to proclaim freedom to the captives, the recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, and to announce the year of the Lord's favor! Hallelujah!

Division diminishes and inhibits our fulfillment of this sacred call.

Scripture warns us: "Without vision the people perish." Do we share Jesus' vision for his church? Do we live out this vision personally and corporately finding our common identity as a new humanity through the Word made flesh who dwells among us by grace and in whom we dwell by faith.

Are we being led by the Holy Spirit to share Christ with all nations and kindreds and peoples and tongues as one holy, catholic and apostolic church?

Yes, God calls Christ's family to learn each others' songs of praise, to teach each other our own and to create new hymns of celebration together. God calls the whole Church to journey together as pilgrims to the New Jerusalem, walking in love together

even as Christ loved us, walking together as children of the Light – the true Light that illuminates the dark places of the world with a new hope, a new life and a new song.

When we shall have obeyed God's call and are approaching the end of our pilgrimage can it be we shall hear those beautiful words first repeated by the prophet Isaiah: "Then shall the redeemed of the Lord return and come with singing unto Zion and everlasting joy shall be upon their head; they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and mourning shall flee away."

AMEN

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