

THE BIBLICAL-BROAD CHRISTOLOGY OF THE CHRISTIAN-CONNECTION CHURCHES

Craigville
Theological
Colloquy
IX.10

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ARCHIVES consulted: The Congregational Christian Historical Society, The Disciples of Christ Historical Society, Eureka College....#2344: "Fragment of American church history: The 'Christian' Campmeeting Association of the 'Christian Connection' churches, founder-holder of Craigville (Mass.)." This Thinksheet is a repro of my "Forgotten Legacy: The Historical Theology of the 'Christian' Component of the UCC" (HISTORICAL INTELLIGENCER, Fall/84), from a speech at the opening session of Craigville Theological Colloquy I....This present Thinksheet is toward a brief presentation at Colloquy IX, 20-24 July 92.

1 The christology of the Christian Connection churches is harder to research than is the case with the three other communions in the 1957 birth of the UCC, & that for two reasons: (1) In 1931, the CC disappeared into the CCC (the Congregational [and] Christian Churches), uniting with the other CC (the Congregational Churches); & (2) Few of their literary remains are in the form of books & extended essays; the "Christian" movement in America invented the church newspaper, & most of this periodical literature in the archives is poorly indexed, if at all. (While teaching one course each semester at Eureka College, which was close to where I was pastoring, I read all the early copies of THE MILLENNIAL HARBINGER. The library director, in a letter 18 Mar 92, told me none of these earliest "Christian" newspapers has even yet been indexed. Somebody hungering for a thesis subject ought to show up with a laptop.) And I guess I better add (3): Says the Disciples director of library & archivist, D.I.McWhirter, in a 3 Apr 92 letter to me, "All of the groups within our ["Christian"] Movement are very hard to pin down on specific theological issues. This has always been one of our characteristics about which we have boasted." Further, no one could ever speak for the whole movement.

2 Austin Craig, the eponymous ancestor of Craigville, is the standout leader among the Christian Connection churches that in 1832 refused to join what became the Disciples of Christ (for reasons I detail on pp.10f). True, no one could ever speak for all the nonmerging churches, but he comes closest. But before looking at his christology, let's have a peek at a few others in the movement:

1811 R.Marshall & J.Thompson, "A Brief Historical Account of Sundry Things in the Doctrines and State of the Christian, or as it is commonly called, The Newlight Church, Containing their testimony against several doctrines held in that church, and its disorganized state; together with some reasons why those two brethren purpose to seek for a more pure and orderly connexion" (Cincinnati: J.Carpenter). The longish pamphlet's titlepage bears also this: "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.--Paul."

P.17: Among Newlighters, "the preachers in general, and the body of people hold to Stone's views on the Atonement [he being antitrinitarian]; yet many private members still believe [as Calvinists] in Christ's vicarious sufferings....Some retain the idea that Christ is God, equal with the Father; others believe, that he is distinct from the Father--the first creature ever made--and the highest link in creation, nearest to God; and others believe that he never had existence until conceived in the womb of the Virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Ghost. Some believe that there is a personal Holy Ghost; others that it is just the Father; and others that it is only the spirit, or meaning and influence of the Gospel." The authors then repent of a recent publication in which they promoted "the propriety of every society, or denomination having a specific statement of their sentiments, both on doctrines and discipline." After "a few years of practical experiment," they'd concluded that "it would not hold in practice as well as it appeared in theory," so "as honest men and Christians" they changed their minds.

They switched from the principle of clarity to what I'll call the principle of charity. Definite, written creeds & canons had made one thing definitely clear, viz that creedal-canonical clarity insured intellectual disunity. As many others in the "Christian" movement, they switched emphasis to unity, which was the movement's original impulse based on adherence to the NT, & only charity could unite these hyperindividualistic frontier folk. Oncoming, as representing this spirit, was the slogan, "In essentials, unity; in nonessentials, liberty; in all

things, charity."

An historical analogy, implied in the word "broad" in this Thinksheet's title: About 1850, some Anglicans simplified 18th-c. latitudinarianism into what soon was dubbed the broad-church movement. Desiring to deliver the Church of England from the intellectual harshness & ecclesiastical divisiveness of the past two centuries, they claimed that Anglicanism's outstanding characteristic was comprehensiveness, & that quality should prevail in the church's mind & councils....The downside, in both cases, was the tendency for broadmindedness to degenerate into flatmindedness, ie anything-goes, no-idea-is-worth-fighting-over, intellectual indifference. This mentality has no defense from the riches of the past, consequently is overwhelmed by the present (thus the term "modernism").

Modernism can be atheist, polytheistic, or unitarian; it cannot be trinitarian. Why not? Because the Trinity & integral christological doctrines is a hard-news, hard-edged, hard-fought-in-every-age intellectual rendering of the biblical Story. The latitudinarian-broad mind finds it "controversial," meaning unacceptable because a violation of "love."

In 1832, most of the Presbyterians, Baptists, Methodists, & others who'd become "Christians" merged with the Campbellites to become a new denomination, the Disciples of Christ. The Campbells' intellectual rigor now saved most of the "Christians" from sliding into unitarianism. Those who refused to join became known as Christian-Connection churches, some of whom founded Craigville. In 1844 they entered an "informal entente with Unitarians" (Ahlstrom, 452n) to found Meadville (Pa.) Seminary (now in the U. of Chicago complex). The Unitarians were doctrinally hard, so their mentality overwhelmed that of the doctrinally soft Connectionalists. (The only Christian Connection seminary, of brief life, was founded in New York State by Austin Craig. From it, Meadville took over the function of preparing pastors for Christian Connection churches, though some were trained in intellectually less rigorous Bible schools of long standing--Johnson Bible College being the one owning the reprint rights to this 1811 pamphlet.)

Ca. 1860 David Millard ("minister of the New-Testament"), "The True Messiah Exalted, or Jesus Christ Really the Son of God, Vindicated; in Three Letters to a Presbyterian Minister" (pub. "for the author" at Canandaigua, NY; n.d.; 38pp). Nothing else is on the titlepage except the text constituting the theme of the upcoming Craigville Colloquy: "Whom [sic] say ye that I am?"--Jesus; "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God."--Peter. Here we see a Christian Connection minister battling the unitarian tendency in the Connection, his weapons being the NT dominical titles, "Messiah" & "Son of God."

The Christian Connection churches refused, however, to merge with the Unitarians for the same reason they refused to merge with the Disciples of Christ: both denominations were doctrinally clear, & the Christian Connection folk saw clarity as enemy. From the very first year of Craigville camp meetings (1872), the planning committee saw to it that the preachers included both trinitarians & unitarians (as well as both sexes: they didn't want to be clear on patriarchy, either). To my limited knowledge of church history, this programming principle was unique. I for one am glad that our United Church of Christ is narrow-minded on the matter: we are trinitarians, though some are (Matt. Arnold) "vague half-believers of our [they think] casual creeds."

1923 Simon Addison Bennett, "The Christian Denomination and Christian Doctrine: A Brief Analysis of the Contribution to the History of Doctrine of the Denomination Known as the Christian Church" (n.p., but this typed note on the titlepage: "Written originally in 1923 as a part of Dr. Bennett's study while at the University of Chicago School of Divinity. ¶Published originally in September, 1926 by the Christian Publishing Association of Dayton, Ohio. ¶Recopied in November, 1966, by the Old Union United Church of Christ and their pastor, Dr. Clyde K. Hunter, Edinburg, Indiana." ("School of Divinity" should be "Divinity School." The "Christian" movement is represented by two of the University-of-Chicago-complex seminaries, viz the Disciples Divinity House & Meadville Seminary.)

Pp.46f: "If an individual is living a good upright life who cares what his speculative opinions may be?....The Christian Church leaders have been active in

social reform. Their emphasis upon character as the test of fellowship can be shown to have produced practical results....They were advocates of human liberty, opposing the institution of slavery." From the movement's earliest days "down to the present, the Christian Church has emphasized human freedom, temperance, moral and social reform."....Our use of "Christian" is "undivisive, unsectarian and expressive....Christian Connection has sometimes been used," but 'Connection' is not part of our name." The early leaders "tried to avoid" the movement's turning into a denomination....Later, the community-church movement largely did manage to avoid becoming a denomination. I represented it in the National & World Council of Churches & can testify to the pressures on us to fit the mold. Most of our churches joined the UCC (United Church of Christ & United Church of Canada). The two movements were local-ecumenical: the local church as the church local, all Christians in each location in full fellowship--in the earlier movement, by the simple name "Christian"; in the later, by joint action (as in my "Unity Through Community," the 8 May 57 CHRISTIAN CENTURY feature article).

"The Bible is the creed and rule of faith and practice. Efforts were made in some of the early conferences to draw up a creed or confession but the committee invariably reported the Bible or the New Testament as the creed. It was believed that it could be better understood and would be of larger use thus taken, than if interpreted or limited by a confession or creedal statement."

"Christ himself the head of the Church." The living church & church traditions were "cast aside. The early church and the apostles were also subordinated to Jesus....His simple faith and message were more to be trusted than the authority of delegated bodies or individuals. The Christian Church has no creedal formula on the person of Christ other than a general acceptance of the Scriptural statements. Orthodox bodies have sometimes regarded the Christians as Unitarians. This has largely been due to the fact that Christian ministers have generally regarded the Trinity as a product of speculation arising outside the Bible itself. This fact and the relation with the Unitarians in Meadville Seminary and Antioch College [whose president Horace Mann was, at H.M.'s suggestion, succeeded by Austin Craig] have furnished the grounds for the charge. However, the Christian Church has always given Jesus the exalted position of leader. He delivered the gospel and is the supreme head of the Church."....Our "great contribution has been the practical advocacy of a broader fellowship, recognizing the worth and freedom of the individual."

Historical Jesus NOTE: Bennett wrote this during the period when Ritschl dominated Euramerican NT studies. Unhistorical & rationalistic, he modernized Jesus' "kingdom of God" to mean "the achievement of the universal moral community," with the historical Jesus as exemplar (See Helmut Koester's SBL presidential address, "Jesus the Victim," JBL Spr/92 pp.3-15.). Attacks on this modernism were soon to come: Weiss (the eschatological-apocalyptic Jesus, definitively laid out three years after Bennett by Schweitzer in THE QUEST OF THE HISTORICAL JESUS, which concludes that the historical Jesus is forever unavailable to us, but Jesus Christ is always available to us "if we walk with him"), Wrede, Gunkel, Bousset, Troeltsch, Otto....Then the history-of-religions school came to the rescue, with Käsemann's 1953 lecture's switching the base from person to message: the "new quest" for the historical Jesus was for the historical foundation of the Christian kerygma (the early-Christian proclamation). The effect, intended or not, has been a near-return to Ritschl: a largely uneschatological Jesus with the kerygma pried off him, along with "early attempts at gnosticizing or catholicizing Jesus' message, adherence to patriarchal, anti-feminist, and hierarchical structures of society, [and] the desire to establish rule and order in religious communities with their worship, liturgy, creeds, and systems of subordination. What emerges in all instances is a portrait of Jesus, drawn as scientifically verifiable history, which is free of these secondary accretions and alterations....We are again on the way toward a human Jesus who is just like one of us, one who holds values that are very close to our ideological commitments,...a social reformer..., a Jesus who, as a real human person, can stand as an example and inspiration for worthy causes." Koester sees some truth in all this, but his

view is more profound. Whether we see Jesus as savior or as supporter of our cherished causes, "the question is still the same" & it's impossible to manage a definitive resolution of it: (in Colloquy vein), who do we say Jesus is? "Perhaps" the Gospel of Thomas "reveals the real and uncontaminated Jesus as well as his most original words," & perhaps the "Jesus Seminar" is producing some solid results. But no facile explanation will ever dispense with the need for personal decision about Jesus. Koester's angle is that the early church (some now call it the "Jesus movement," but Koester is allergic to "movement" as the Nazis' self-description [*Bewegung*]) saw (1) Jesus as a victim whose "execution implied a denial of all values of a world order that had made Jesus its victim," & (2) themselves as "charged to design a new order of the world in which the victim was vindicated." Jesus the victim was seen as "the divine human being," as Wisdom/Sophia, and as a political figure "confronting the political eschatology of the Roman imperial period, both in its pagan and Jewish forms....Roman eschatological expectations had their origins in the same Egyptian prophecies that also influenced Isaiah 9-11 and, in turn, Jewish and Christian eschatology."

Against the new-historical-Jesus scholars, Koester considers it "likely" that NT eschatology begins with Jesus himself: "Within a year or two of Jesus' death, Paul persecuted the followers of Jesus because of their eschatological proclamation." That eschatological element the early church developed in response to the world's "political and metaphysical systems based on ideologies of eschatological fulfillment." "The framework for the Christian message" included Jesus' eschatology, Messiah, Wisdom/Sophia, the coming Son of man, temple ideology, & Paul's "proclamation of Jesus' resurrection as the turning point of the ages....After Jesus' death, continuity [with the historical Jesus] was no longer possible. ¶The coming of the new age through 'Jesus the victim' implied a complete reversal of all political, social, and religious values that were held sacred and holy in the world of ancient Judaism as well as in the Roman system of realized eschatology [through Augustus as "Son of God"] [underlining, mine]." "Critical historical inquiry may be able to establish that in the earliest tradition of Jesus' sayings he himself proclaimed and lived such a reversal of values, that serving others rather than lording it over them was the order of the rule of God....It is a vision that reckons with God's coming, a coming that begins to be realized in the community of those who dare to follow" Jesus. But the historical Jesus is unreconstructible, & attempts in that direction only reveal "the preoccupation with the search for the great human personality." That search "may bypass the real challenge that arises from early Christian texts, namely, to understand our world on the basis of criteria that have their origin in the proclamation of Jesus the victim.....After Jesus died, his followers recognized that Jesus as a great human person would mean nothing, but that the kingdom of God had to be proclaimed as the utopia of a new community, a new political order, and indeed a new world."

Given this Thinksheet's title, why have I given so much attention to the Jesus-of-history history? (1) To protect Christian Connection christology from unsympathetic rejection: it was wrestling what we must continue to wrestle with; & (2) To provide, as background for the Colloquy, a summary of an article essential among materials for doing christology today.

1929 W.A. Harper, President of Elon College, "The Genius of the Christian Church: A Study in The Origin And History Of The Denomination Known As Christians" (n.p.; in series "Studies in the Christian Religion"; published as the union with the Congregational Churches was in its final stage; Elon is now a UCC college).

Pp.6f: Christian theology is not a "finished product" but a continuous development under the criterion of intelligibility. As for "the Christian Movement," we've had & have "a half dozen convictions....Convictions underlie attitudes and the doctrines which arise in any situation are analogies and social patterns made use of to express the attitudes that rest back upon these abiding convictions." (More simply, the movement is from convictions to attitudes to doctrines.)....What we have in Harper is a modernized primitivism. The Christian Movement was primitivistic in two forms: (1) **restorationist** primitivism, the romantic ideal of repro-

ducing the early church in thinking, polity, & action; (2) **reconstructionist** primitivism, holding as close as possible to the early-church realities but refashioning them as appropriate to changing circumstances--one might say, a conservative modernism. Harper refers to works of the founders of the U. of Chicago "social gospel," & accepts Shailer Mathews' statement of the Christian fundamentals (THE FAITH OF MODERNISM, pp.80f): "1. Man needs God's help. 2. God is fatherly and is forgiving. 3. Jesus is the revelation in human experience of God effecting salvation. 4. Good-will is of the essence of God's nature and should characterize human life. 5. Immortality. 6. The Bible is the record of God's revelation and is useful for the development of the religious life." In further pp., Harper considers "only the basic conviction with reference to Jesus and the doctrines severally which it produced" in Antioch, the Greek world, the Roman world, the feudalistic world, the nationalistic world, and the democratic world. He's big on what today we call contextualism. In all these changing cultures, "God has been conceived throughout under the pattern of a Sovereign, but this pattern has been interpreted according to the prevailing, ruling ideas in each particular age. For example, at the beginning this sovereignty was expressed paternalistically or patriarchally as being consonant with the Jewish conception of government." Another characteristic of the movement was that for its time, it was especially sensitive to what we now call women's issues, and often acknowledged a woman's call to preach.

Pp.38f: Because the word "doctrines" seemed to imply authority & the abridging of liberty of conscience, the "Christians" preferred to speak of "**principles**," but Harper is not so squeamish. He speaks of "six doctrines or contributions to the development of Christian doctrine in America": "1. Jesus Christ is the only Head of the Church. 2. The name Christians is a sufficient designation for the followers of Christ. 3. The Bible is the sufficient rule of faith and practice. 4. Christian character is a sufficient test of fellowship or of church membership. 5. The liberty of conscience or the right of private judgment is the duty and privilege of each individual Christian. 6. Union of Christ's followers is the ultimate goal of the church, that the world might believe."....While "Christians" have been "prolific writers in the field of religion and particularly of Christian Journalism, barely a handful of books during all their history have been written by these leaders to expound theology." None of the writings of W.Kincade, N.Summerbell, J.F.Burnett, J.G.Bishop, A.Craig, C.Summerbell, or W.S.Long has achieved authoritative status. "The Christian Church [movement] has not been interested in Christianity as a system of theology or as a body of doctrine, but...primarily...interested in it as a way of life which each individual follower of Christ is privileged, and, even more, under bounden duty, to interpret for himself as the Holy Spirit shall lead him." So we have tried "to promote Christian union, not on a basis of doctrine, but on a basis of life." (The reason the Campbells called their movement "the Disciples of Christ" was that the name "Christian" "had already been taken by another body with which they had been working side by side for many years." In 1832, most of the "Christians" disappeared into the "Disciples," as I've noted above.)

3 We come now to **Austin Craig's** christology. Why so big a backgrounder in §2? Because (1) this relevant material is, to my knowledge, nowhere else brought together in handy form, & (2) this seemed the best way to convey the spirit of a movement whose spirit, more than in the case of most denominations, formed & informed its theology, thus its christology. When you know-feel that that spirit was radically privatistic in hermeneutics, each one one's own interpreter (as the logic of Wyclif's late-14th-c. ploughboy reader of the Bible), you know that any theological pronouncements of the movement's eminences (whether high or low christology, whether trinitarian or unitarian) would be experienced as in violation of the movement's spirit. Beware, then, of arguing from silence: the fact that theological doctrines are not precisely articulated in writing should not mislead one into imagining that the leaders were untheological. The theology of each leader, face to face with God & the Bible's open pages, had exactly the same status as the theology of the humblest, least educated member of the church.

(1) Craig was a person of wide learning & broad sympathies. While he gave general consent to "Where the Bible speaks we speak, where the Bible is silent we are silent," he could not conform to the strict simplism that **creed** = **canon** (the biblical text) = **creed** (my formulation of the "Christian" intellectual fundament). His spirit & mind fitted the "biblical-broad" adjective in this Thinksheet's title....I must be careful not to form him in my image! My diary of $\frac{1}{2}$ c. ago today reports a conversation I had with a biblical-narrow, Bible-only clergyman (as it happened, Orthodox Presbyterian) of whom I said this: "The Bible, for him, soaks up all there is of 'the Word of God'--it does not for me."

(2) With Craig I share daily exposure to the Greek NT, but not his practice of writing his ex-students in Greek & insisting they respond in same (as a way of encouraging them to the daily devotional-&-intellectual use of the original-language NT, not letting Greek slip out of memory). You can guess that he was (1) deeply respectful of the NT text's exact wording & (2) assiduous in exegesis & exposition: he cared deeply about discovering & communicating the NT message.

(3) Did he, then, give equal weight to all parts & teachings of the NT? Nobody ever did. Of him, Harold Worthley, the Congregational-Christian archivist, said to me recently "His christology was more Paul than John," & "low" but chiefly in that sense. It would be inaccurate to call him either trinitarian or unitarianian, for those are preached views. Rather, he was irenic, preaching that we should be as the NT is, uninterested in the number in God. Dogmatism such as Alexander Campbell's turned him off, & he did not hesitate to call violaters of "Christian" inclusivism those who insisted on some particular wedding of the NT & philosophy. (Shunning any such wedding, the Christian Connection folk took a dim view of the pronouncements of ancient, medieval, & modern church councils, more dim than did the Congregationalists. In the UCC, it's the German side, the Evangelical & Reformed, with the bright view of the ecumenical councils. Our English side was for Scripture rather than Scripture + Tradition.)

(4) Craig objected to formularistic christology. He was an anti-intellectualistic intellectual, resisting Disciples' rationalism (from Alex. Campbell's U. of Edinburgh studies in the tradition of Locke & the Scottish philosophers)--yet he was as far from being an anti-intellectual as clergy can be. What he wanted & strove for was (to use a Tennyson phrase) "that heart & mind, according well, may make one music." "The so-called Christian Connection, a minority revivalistic movement among people of lowly station on the New England frontier [was] strongly anti-Calvinist" (Ahlstrom, 446), & both the revivalism & the anti-Calvinism militated against intellectualism & theological articulation (& therefore also rigidity).

(5) Complementing his feeling/thinking balance, Craig insisted on preaching & teaching from the whole Bible in balance. For this reason, his christology had more depth & less dogma than the christologies of those who gave lopsided attention to the NT. So great was his mastery of Hebrew that he almost finished a Roget-like synonymy of the Hebrew Bible (though he didn't always have the whole original-languages Bible on his person, as always the Greek NT).

(6) Though no one could give closer attention to the exact wording in Hebrew-Aramaic-Greek, Craig was no inerrantist-infallibilist; such bibliolatry, he snorted, was "worshiping the baby Jesus' swaddling clothes." Further, anyone setting up "a theory of inspiration as a test of fellowship among us, would step off the Christian platform and become a sectarian." This frame of mind protected him from the temptation to erect an authoritative christology on a few favorite phrases in a few NT texts. He had faith that each believer, approaching Scripture honestly & prayerfully, would discover a christology appropriate to their condition & vocation....Do I think that faith excessive? Yes, for the living Word speaking in Scripture speaks also beyond Scripture, including in the ecumenical creeds & the Reformation confessions, both of which serve (1) to keep essentials from leaking out & (1) to protect against loss of Christian unity & identity. Besides, the Bible alone, with the church living & (as Tradition) dead, is incapable of "yielding both clear & consistent guidance for the puzzles of faith & the predicaments of life. But in my opinion. this naivete was more than offset by their passionate and pure application to the biblical text, of which they were...masters" (p.11 of my H.I. article).

I think it worthwhile to be more precise about how they felt-thought about the Bible. (In this I can say "he," for while Craig could not speak for Connectionalists in all matters, he could & did on this one, where he was, as also on a few other matters, "the incarnation of the Christian Connection in a single skinbag" (ibid., 14). They-he believed the Bible **sufficient** for guidance in "religion faith and practice" & **infallible** only in the sense that "the Bible does not fail to provide us with the guidance...when we search the Scriptures in the Spirit" (ibid., 11f)--- *not* (in the modern fundamentalist sense) **inerrant**, errorless. "No paper pope was surrogate for the risen and reigning Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. They were Jesus people, for whom the Bible was the *written witness to the living Word*" (ibid., 11; in a n. on 14, I clarify the difference thus: "My wife is *infallible*, but she certainly is not *inerrant*. I have never known her to *fail* to love, but to *err* is human. As for me, I sometimes get to feeling I'm *inerrant*, but it never comes to any good, and Loree continues to love me *infallibly* until the seizure passes.").

To show the awe with which Craig handled the Bible, consider the case of 2Tim.3.16, which in KJV is "All scripture is given by inspiration of God." When in 1869 Craig was invited to become the first president of the Connectionalist seminary, he refused on the ground that the trustees required him to subscribe to "the entire Scripture" as the meaning of "All." As "a minister trained up from his childhood in our connexion," he could not support "this unbiblical phraseology" offered as "test words of faith, differing from the words of our divine and only creed....*Christ* is head over all things to the Church, and all inspired Scripture an infallible authority and guide in all matters of religious faith and practice....our entire connexion, should be satisfied that the teachers [and the president hold] no views contrary to the truth of the Gospel." So there! The trustees gulped & elected him president (W.S.Harwood, LIFE AND LETTERS OF AUSTIN CRAIG, Revell/08, 318f)....NOTE: (1) He didn't consider "all" the Bible inspired (nor do the biblical authors!), & (2) Unlike Protestant fundamentalists of his day & ours, he didn't consider the Bible authoritative beyond "religious faith and practice." (Eg, his last appearances in the Craigville Tabernacle, in his death year 1881, were eight lectures not directly on religion but on social science, specifically demography.)....Craig was widely recognized as an eminent biblical scholar. His translation of 2Tim.3.16, "Every scripture inspired of God....," appears in the Am. Standard Version (1901), on which he was continually consulted by none other than Phillip Schaff (eminence on what was to become the German side of the UCC), who as chair pleaded in vain for Craig to attend meetings of the translation committee. ...In studying the early history of that seminary, I was struck by its broad-&-deep-minded bibliocentricity, identical to that of The Biblical Seminary of N.Y. (1900), under whose auspices I had my first seminary course (1937), & which in 1965 became N.Y. Theological Seminary, where I long taught & still continue in a modest relationship....The UCC Basis of Union (1957) is, as were the Connectionalists, wary of creedal conformity: an confession should be "a testimony, and not a test, of faith."....Another parallel between the two seminaries in their early years: conversion ("experimental[="experiential"] piety," in the now-quaint phrase of the Connectionalist seminary) was one of the three requirements, the other two being belief in the Bible & the intention to become a pastor.

The bearing of all this on Craig's christology? While wondrously appreciative of all scriptures bearing on the question, his hermeneutics included the critical principle mentioned above: *not* "every scripture" was inspired. That was just too latitudinarian for the translators of NIV (1978), who backslid into "All Scripture is God-breathed" (also, NRSV: "All scripture is inspired by God"). For him, the christological core is smaller than it was & is for those who uncritically receive the Tradition. He was no modernist, but he was distinctly a modern born out of time.

(7) Craig was wide-angle (inclusive) in christology, as in theology generally, not because he thought specifics unimportant but because he prized **unity** more than narrow-angle neatness, which always proves divisive. Doctrinal **liberty**, he believed, was not too high a price to pay for unity. Given to colorful speech, he put it these ways: (1) We "can put the Tree of Life to better use than to chop it up into doctrinal shillalahs" to beat on each other with...."The minister

most needed now in our day is not the smart debater but the man who somehow makes people think admiringly and adoringly of our Jesus." (Why not "man or woman"? Because while men & women were equally honored for the gift of preaching, the Connectionalists balanced that freedom with order, in limiting the pastorate to men, "ministers." This discrimination died out after the merger with the Congregationalists, who began to ordain women to the pastorate soon after the Civil War.) (2) "We fellowship the Christian heart of all; leaving the head of the Christian, in any particular case, to be flat, broad, or round as the case may be. [A member of a church of the Christian Connection] may be Trinitarian or Unitarian, Calvinist, Armenian [sic], or Universalist" (Harwood, 300; underlinings, mine). In these two quotations you catch the spirit of these folk who founded Craigville: they were humble, magnanimous, of good humor, & ecumenical (early meetings in the Craigville Tabernacle having, as leaders, Congregationalists, Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, Roman Catholics, Episcopalians, & Unitarians.)

4 I must not conclude without this: I consider the subject in this Think-sheet's title a good try but ultimately a failure: the **Trinity**, I am convinced, is not optional to Christianity. The law of inclusion, arguing the trinitarian position as implicit in the NT (eg, 1Cor.6.11), is weaker than the law of parsimony (minimum hypothesis), arguing the unitarian position: the heart fights for the former, but the mind uses the logic of the latter to win. Connectionalism had a strong tendency to sag into unitarianism, & Craig's "The Gospel of Love, the Apostles' Creed" was for many years sold as a 3¢ tract by The American Unitarian Association--though his fuller thought, as in "The Man Christ Jesus" (chap.4, pp.53-58, vol.1 of WRITINGS AND ADDRESSES OF AUSTIN CRAIG [ed. by Martyn Summerbell; The Christian Publishing Association, Dayton, O., 1911; vol.2, 1913]), is broader & deeper than unitarian. Further, Christian-unitarian tends to sag into panreligious-unitarian, as in most Unitarian-Universalist churches today. The third sag is into a humanism of social concern, parallel with Judaism's sag (1875) into Ethical Culture & (later) Reconstructionism....Christians, defend the Trinity!