

The Centurion

The Parish Magazine of St. Alban's Church

1011 Old Joppa Road, Joppa, Maryland, 21085



My dear People:

By the time you read this we should have all new lights in the reception area of the parish hall. Special thanks goes out to the donors who underwrote this project, to Bob Farmer who got us the quote for the lights, and to Ellen Pons, her electrician at Country Life Farm, Lou Datoli, and helper Todd Kerr, for installing the new lights. Now when visitors come to church they won't see three burned out fluorescent lights. They will see that we care about how the church looks and that we want to make it a warm, hospitable place where all are welcomed and appreciated.

We have a few other projects in the pipeline as well. One is to replace the air conditioner in the parish hall, which has been on the fritz for some time now. The vestry has received three quotes from local companies and hopes to make a decision on which company to choose very shortly. This is going to be an expensive project, but once again a generous parishioner has come forward and offered to pay for it! Thanks be to God for the faithfulness of his people. Special thanks also goes to Jason Taylor, our junior warden, who arranged for the contractors to come out and give us quotes. After the A/C unit is all taken care of we will begin thinking about repainting the exterior of the church and working on the gutters. A picture board is being created that shows the condition of the exterior and why we need to have it repainted. The vestry will very shortly begin taking quotes for this work. Take a walk around the outside of the church after services on a Sunday and look at the walls. You will see that they are in dire need of repainting and restoration.

In related news, I do hope as many people as possible will be able to come out for the workday scheduled for this month on Saturday, May 21st from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. These are always fun times of fellowship. We'll gussy up the outside mainly... pulling weeds, putting down mulch, etc. But we'll also be doing some jobs on the inside. There will be something for everyone to do! When we're all done a cookout lunch on our grill (recently repaired by Rich Burt) will follow.

Changing gears, I want to thank everyone in the church for the kind sentiments and gifts given to me on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of my priestly ordination. As I have said already, it is a great privilege to serve you. Please keep me and my family in your prayers. I look forward to ministering *to you* and *alongside you* for many years to come. Saint Alban's is a fantastic church, and it is my hope that more people will be drawn into our fellowship and community as the years go on. May God bless and keep you.

Affectionately, your Friend and Pastor,

J. Gordon Anderson

May 2016

IN THIS ISSUE:

Theology, p. 2-3

Christological Controversies

Parish News and Updates, p. 4

Important News and Other Items

UPCOMING HOLY DAYS:

May 2nd - Ss. Philip & James

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

May 3rd - Rogation Tuesday

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

May 4th - Rogation Wednesday

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

May 5th - Ascension Day

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

May 16th - Monday in Whitsun

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

May 17th - Tuesday in Whitsun

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

Jun 11th - St. Barnabas

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

Jun 24th - St. John Baptist

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

Jun 29th - St. Peter

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

Jul 4th - Independence Day

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

Jul 25th - St. James

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

 THEOLOGY: *A Look at Some of the Early Heresies Regarding the Person of Jesus: Part 1, The Historical Background*

This past Lent a group of us got together each Tuesday night to study the four major christological (having to do with the study of Christ) heresies addressed by the ancient Church. Our guide was a little book by J.W.C. Wand, sometime bishop of London, entitled, “The Four Great Heresies.” Since a number of people were not able to attend the study, and for the benefit of those who did attend but found parts of it to be rather abstruse, the editorial board of *The Centurion* decided to write a brief synopsis of the study. Part one of the synopsis will introduce us to some of the underlying issues and other background theories that should be kept in mind when studying these ancient controversies.

Bishop Wand opens his book with an explanation of the word “heresy.” He states that it is bad *theology* not necessarily bad *religion*. That means that people can be conceptually committed to incorrect ideas but still be good people... even good *Christian* people who (gasp) might actually make it to heaven! Ultimately, theology and religion, though undoubtedly interrelated, are two different things. But lest we take heresy lightly Wand is quick to add that bad theology can definitely lead to bad religion. Therefore it is incumbent upon the Church, guided by the Holy Spirit, to clarify her teaching on theological matters so as to avoid drifting into heresy. And hopefully her people will believe what she teaches! Note that in the Nicene Creed we say “I **believe** one, holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church” not, “I **believe in** one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church.” When we recite the Creed we confess to “believe” what the Church teaches. We are not simply acknowledging her existence.

In ancient times all the information the Church had about the Lord Jesus Christ was to be found in the sacred scriptures, which had been interpreted over the centuries in the writings of the apostolic fathers, and in liturgical traditions and devotional practices. All of that stuff is often referred to under the blanket term “tradition.” In the late 3rd and early 4th century the Church began to realize that it was necessary to clearly articulate what she believed about the person of Jesus. She had to find a way to reconcile the monotheism (the belief that there is just one God) of the Old Testament and Hebrew tradition whence she came and which she still believed, with the final revelation of God in the person of Jesus Christ, who, according to the New Testament, claimed to be God. Were there two Gods? Or was Jesus a lesser, created being? Was he really even human? And what about the Holy Spirit? How did he fit into the picture? These were the type of questions that had to be sorted out.

The reason these questions had to be answered in authoritative manner was because certain individuals who took it upon themselves to do so came up with some theories and ideas about the person of Jesus which alarmed the larger Church, and did not appear to agree with the witness of scripture and tradition. It is important to emphasize that the people who taught what was later decided to be heresy were not horrible, evil people, who were hell-bent on destroying the Church of God. Quite the contrary. They were people who were held in the highest esteem as theologians, clergy, and religious... earnest seekers of truth whose ideas, according to the rest of the Church, were judged to be not fully correct because they emphasized one aspect of truth at the expense of another.

Like other sciences, theology proceeds on the basis of trial and error. What we really see in the life of the ancient Church in regard to these controversies about the person and work of Jesus Christ is the working of the Holy Spirit. When Jesus promised that the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, would come and would guide the Church into all truth, it was inevitable that the Church would arrive at this truth in different times and in different ways. Everybody would not jump to the same conclusion about disputed doctrinal matters all at once. So, disputations arose, theologians exchanged letters, alliances were formed, local councils were held, and eventually ecumenical councils – gatherings of the *entire* Church – were held so that the everyone could come to agreement on these christological and other issues. All of this was guided by the Holy Spirit.

What we see when we look back at these disputes is that doctrine is something that develops. Doctrine means “teaching.” Simply put, the doctrine of Christ – all that the Church believes and teaches about Christ – is not something that dropped out of the sky in a neat little package with a ribbon and bow on top. There is a difference between revelation and doctrine. The former is something that happens in history. God reveals himself to man through events and symbols. Theology and doctrine is man’s effort to make sense of that revelation and preserve its original value and integrity. So God revealed himself finally and in his fullest in the person of Jesus Christ. But it took some time – several centuries – for her to fully process and articulate who Jesus is and formulate doctrine about him.

With all of that in mind, let us now look at the four great heresies as outlined by Bishop Wand in his fantastic little book. The article continues on the next page. ✠

THEOLOGY: *A Look at Some of the Early Heresies Regarding the Person of Jesus: Part 2, The Heresies Themselves*

While there were numerous small heresies concerning the person of Christ that arose since the earliest days of the Church (some of these we even see evidence of in the New Testament), the book by Bishop Wand begins with the heresy that necessitated the calling of the first ecumenical council, the **Arian heresy**. This heresy gets its name from its founder, a priest of the Church in Alexandria named Arius (256-336). Originally Arius was concerned with the trinitarian question: is God one or three. He decided on the former – God was one. But what did this mean for the Son and Holy Ghost? His answer was that they must have been created by God the Father. The “Logos” (the second person of the Godhead, Jesus Christ) was not to be identified with the Father, and was only “God” in a derivative sense. Thus, in an effort to save trinitarian theology (such as it was) Arius actually destroyed it by postulating one supreme God and two lesser gods. Opposed to Arius was his bishop, Alexander, and later Athanasius, at that time a deacon. Many other people in the diocese opposed Arius’ teaching too, and so they complained to Alexander who ordered that his clergy should teach that the Son was of the same substance as the Father (*homo-ousios*). Athanasius later wrote that to be saved sinful man’s inmost being had to be changed. Whereas sinful man was condemned to die, and whereas in God alone was the fount of immortality, to escape death man must therefore be made to partake of the nature of God. This was the very purpose of the incarnation. “God became man in order that we might become God.” No lesser being than God could effect this transformation. That was why it was necessary to maintain that the Son was of one substance with the Father. That substance was communicated to us by him and ensures our immortality. Since the Arian controversy was spreading through the empire and causing unrest, the emperor summoned a general council at Nicea in 325 to settle the matter. At this council Arianism was condemned.

The heresy that followed next was the **Apollinarian heresy**. While the Arian heresy downplayed Christ’s divinity, the Apollinarian heresy downplayed his humanity. It was named for its proponent, Apollinarius, who in addition to being a brilliant intellectual was also a bishop. He taught that when the Logos became flesh he became *only* flesh, and that therefore the Logos (Jesus) had a divine personality and spirit, the latter being the highest element in man. The problem with his teaching, though, was that it made Jesus out to be not fully man, which, in terms of redemption, was just as bad as Jesus not being divine! His views were condemned at the second ecumenical council held in Constantinople in 381.

The next heresy to come along was the **Nestorian heresy**. Since everyone had finally come to agree that Jesus was truly God and truly man, the question arose as to how this union could be effected. While named for Nestorius, a monk of the Church in Antioch who later became Bishop of Constantinople, most scholars believe that a bishop by the name of Theodore of Mopsuestia (350-428) was the actual originator of this heresy. He taught that the union of the two natures in Christ was like the union between a husband and wife in marriage. While it is spoken of as “two becoming one flesh” everyone knows that man and wife do not literally unite into one new person. “Union” is more of a figure of speech. That analogy guided his thought about the person of Christ. His human and divine natures were really not united in one person. This theory becomes associated with Nestorius – a controversial and fiery preacher and personality – because he adopted it as a way to combat the Apollinarian heresy. Nestorius and his followers held that the union of the two natures in Christ was a mere “moral” union, and thus that there were two separate persons in the incarnate Christ... this in contrast to what became the orthodox view, that the incarnate Christ was a *single* person both God and man (one person, two natures). Nestorianism was condemned at the third ecumenical council in Ephesus in 431. While the first council proclaimed that Christ was God, and the second that he was man, this third council taught that he was nonetheless *one* person.

The final heresy Wand discusses falls hot on the heels of Nestorianism and is called the **Eutychian heresy**. It’s champion was a man named Eutyches, who was an abbot in Constantinople. Eutyches thought that the way to combat Nestorianism was to understand that in the person of Christ the two natures - human and divine - merged together into one *new* nature. Thus, this heresy is sometimes referred to as the “monophysite” (“one nature”) heresy. Despite making lots of inroads with the movers and shakers in the Church and Empire, his views were eventually condemned at the fourth ecumenical council held in Chalcedon. The problem with this heresy was the same as that of the others: it diminished the person of Christ. If Christ has one “new” nature that is some mixture of human and divine then he cannot represent both God and man and atone for the sins of there world.

This brief sketch cannot do justice to all of the nuances involved in these controversies. It is an exciting history to read. Those who wish to learn more about can purchase the book by Wand used online. It tells the fascinating story of how the Holy Spirit fulfilled the promise of Christ by guiding the Church into all truth. ✠

PARISH NEWS & UPDATES: *Please note these important items!*

Mark Your Calendars

Vestry Meeting - Tuesday, May 17th at 7:00 p.m.
 Parish Work Day - Saturday, May 21st, 8 - 12
 Deanery Meeting - June 9th in Charlottesville, VA
 Diocesan Synod - July 13th - 15th in Tampa, FL
 Parish Yard Sale - Saturday, September 24th, 8 - 12
 Episcopal Visit - Sunday, October 9th
 Annual Meeting - Sunday, November 20th
 Christmas Bazaar - Sunday, December 11th

Flower Power

As many of you have noticed we have the hardest time trying to keep plants alive in the reception area of the parish hall. The room does not get enough light, and the temperature fluctuations are terrible. It's like a plant death chamber. So after experimenting with live plants for a couple of years the church purchased some lovely silk standing plants that look great and never die. We would like to expand on this and buy five displays of silk flowers to place on the literature table under the beautiful quilt made by Tammy Jones. This will help make the space even more inviting and pleasant. The idea is for them be "seasonal" displays. Thus there will be one for Advent/Christmas/Epiphany; an austere but attractive one for winter; one for spring; one for summer; and one for fall. The plan is to buy them as we need them - not purchase all five at once. They are estimated to cost \$100/each - a bargain considering the fact that we will use them for years to come. A local artist has volunteered her time to make them for us! She is none other than Rachael Lynn Tillinghast, daughter of Steve and Linda. Rachael studied flower arranging and worked in the field for a number of years, so she really knows what she is doing. If you are interested in donating towards our first display (our summer display) please let the rector know.

Prayer Book Holy Days

It has been delightful to see attendance at our Prayer Book Holy Day services slowly increase. Over the last few months more people who have never attended these services have made it out for one or two. It is great to attend these services if you have the time. They work especially well for the retired. At them, we read the first part of Morning Prayer (up to the first canticle, usually *Te Deum laudamus*) and then go into the Holy Communion service. So you get your Daily Office with the Psalm and Old Testament reading for the day in as well as the Holy

Eucharist. These services typically last half an hour. Why not consider joining us for one or more of these liturgies sometime?

Our Daily Bread

If you enjoy using the Our Daily Bread devotionals please consider sending them a small donation to defray their expenses, as they send those to the church free of charge. That ministry could certainly use support!

Thank you!

Thanks to everyone who chipped in and help buy Father Edelman a new vacuum cleaner! He loves it and it is doing a fantastic job.

Prayers Requested

Please keep our seminarian and his family in your prayers. Tyler, Holly, and baby daughter Solomè live in Pennsylvania where Tyler attends the historic Reformed Episcopal Seminary. While in seminary he works doing computer web design. The Phass family attends All Saints' Episcopal Church in Wynnewood, PA, which is one of the few Episcopalian parishes in the country that still uses the 1928 Prayer Book, 1940 Hymnal, and KJV Bible exclusively. We of course are blessed to have them come and visit about once a month. If you would like to support them in prayer or financially please see Father Anderson or Tom or Beth Dixon (Holly's parents) to get their mailing address.

Welcome One

Don't forget to bring in non-perishable food items to be donated to Welcome One Emergency Shelter, located in the Belcamp area. This is a joint operation between churches and other faith-based organizations and the local Harford county government. Donations may be placed in the food box in the parish hall.

Special Recognition

Please be sure to give a big, hearty thanks to Tom and Beth Dixon and Steve and Linda Tillinghast, and to their helpers Kiki and Precious Okoye, for the phenomenal children's Sunday school program they have started! It has been doing great and the kids really enjoy it. Thank you, Dixons, Tillinghasts, and Okoye's, for all of your hard work and dedication! ✠