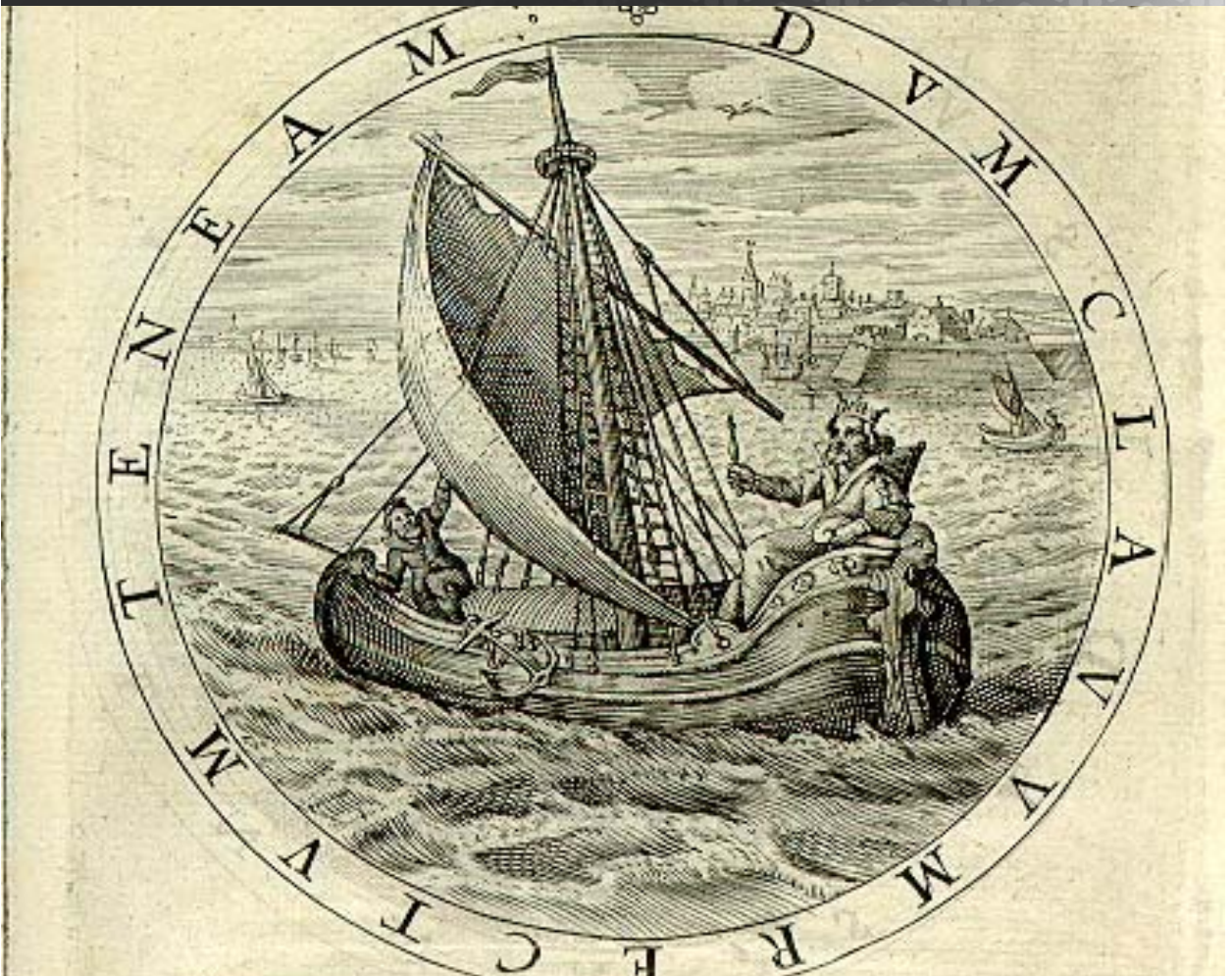




St. James'

ANGLICAN CHURCH



Introduction

Beginning in January 2010, St. James' Anglican Church organized a series of sessions "Formation at 9.30am" led by clergy, laity and invited guests. One year previously, a parish-wide consultation had been initiated to examine the provision of liturgy and teaching in the Parish, especially on Sunday mornings. At the culmination of the consultation, parishioners with an interest in education and formation were invited to gather together; and an organizing group was formed and began its work of planning the provision for formation.

The following addresses given by Paul Stanwood on the doctrines of the Church represent the inaugural series of sessions. Author Paul Stanwood, a long-time parishioner of St. James' and currently People's Warden, is professor emeritus of English at UBC.

When I first began studying theology at university, I stumbled upon the writings of Evagrius of Pontus, a fourth century ascetic, in the *Philokalia*, an anthology of writing beloved in the Eastern Orthodox Church. "A theologian is one who prays, and one who prays is a theologian", wrote Evagrius. Paul Stanwood has laboured at the "altar" of the scholar's desk throughout his life as a professor of English and specialist in the Renaissance and seventeenth-century English literature. And Paul is a man of prayer who is "pickled" in the Anglo-Catholic way of Christianity through a lifetime of worship and service.

In the *Doctrines of the Church* we are invited to reconsider the essentials of Christianity with a theologian as our guide whose life of prayer and learning is a gift to the Church. So it is with thanksgiving and joy that I commend this publication to all who seek to grow in their understanding of the Faith with, as Paul once wrote, "an Anglican twist".

The Revd Fr. Mark Greenaway-Robbins
Eleventh Rector of St. James'

The Incarnation

During the Sundays of Lent 2010, I offered reflections on five core doctrines of our faith: The Incarnation; The Resurrection; The Trinity; The Atonement; The Church. There are others, or different terms, such as sin, justification, redemption, Holy Spirit, and so on, which together may be described as aspects of dogmatics or systematic theology. Let us begin at the beginning, with the Incarnation, magnificently invoked by John the Evangelist.

The opening of John's Gospel, which may be a prologue, or perhaps a thematic introduction to all that follows, may be seen as a poem or hymn in four strophes, or verse stanzas, but with editorial or explanatory intrusions. Some commentators think that this opening of the Gospel really concludes at verse 14, that is, ". . . full of grace and truth."

First Strophe "The Word with God"

(1-2)

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
The same was in the beginning with God.

Second Strophe "The Word and Creation"

(3-5)

All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.
In him was life; and the life was the light of men.
And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehendeth it not.

(6) There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. (7) The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. (8) He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. (9) That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.

Third Strophe "The Word in the World"

(10-12)

He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.
He came unto his own, and his own received him not.
But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:
(13) Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

Fourth Strophe “The Community’s Share in the Word”

(14) And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

(15) John bare witness of him, and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for he was before me.

(16) And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.

(17) For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

(18) No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.

These verses declare the Incarnation, at first recalling the opening of Genesis: “*In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth*” (*In principio creavit Deus caelum et terram*). But John indicates the period before creation: *In principio erat verbum*. The first *was* refers to the existence of the Word, which simply is; then we are told that the Word *was* in God’s presence, in terms of relationship; and finally, *was* God grammatically, a predicate, or a completed statement that may point to Jesus’s divinity.

The Word became flesh, the statement of the Incarnation — the mystery and the most distinctive belief of the Christian faith. Jesus embodies both man and God, and he came to dwell amongst us — in no tent but in the dwelling or tabernacle of the spirit / flesh: and he may be seen (was seen) face-to-face, unlike Moses or Old Testament prophets who looked away from the sight of God.

This union of two natures in one, or *hypostasis*, is not only troubling but also impossible to understand in any ordinary way. The Church has from its earliest centuries insisted on the Incarnation of God’s son “come in the flesh.” There should be no confusion of Christ as part man and part God. Yet the difficulties and challenges of this Christology can be suggested by referring to the first general councils of the Church.

The First Ecumenical or General Council of Nicea in 325 condemned Arius (d. 336), who had affirmed that the Son of God was made of a different substance from that of the Father. The tendency had been to deny the earthly sufferings or the humanity of Christ — in general, a Gnosticism, or “Docetism.”

The Second General Council, the first at Constantinople (381) repudiated Apollinarianism which suggested that Christ’s manhood was incomplete, lacking full moral development.

The Third General Council of Ephesus in 431 opposed yet another so-called heresy: The Nestorians regarded Christ as a human person joined to the divine person of God’s son. In other words, Nestorius apparently held that there were two separate Persons in the Incarnate Christ,

the one Divine and the other human.

And the Fourth General Council of Chalcedon of 451 addressed the Monophysites who affirmed that the human nature of Christ ceased to exist when the divine person of God's son assumed it, that is, in the Incarnate Christ there is only one nature, not an inseparable two.

The doctrine of the Incarnation is not easy, but its principal and orthodox claims are clear: The eternal Word became incarnate, and without losing his divine nature, God has assumed human nature; for Jesus Christ is true God and true man, in the unity of his divine person, and he is therefore our only mediator between God and mankind. Moreover, Jesus Christ possesses two natures — divine and human — and these natures are not confused but united in one person. Similarly, being true God and true man, Christ has a human intellect and will, which he shares with the Father and the Holy Spirit. The new tabernacle of God's glory is expressed in these concluding verses of the opening of John's Gospel. We now are living in the new covenant which replaces that of the old covenant of Sinai.

For myself, I am content “to understand a mystery without a rigid definition,” as Sir Thomas Browne urges in a thoroughly Anglican way, in his great treatise *Religio Medici* (ca. 1636): “me thinkes there be not impossibilities enough in Religion for an active faith. . . . I love to lose my selfe in a mystery, to pursue my Reason to an *oh altitudo*. 'Tis my solitary recreation to pose my apprehension with those involved aenigma's and riddles of the Trinity, with Incarnation, and Resurrection. . . . I learned of Tertullian, *Certum est, quia impossibile est*. I desire to exercise my faith in the difficultest points, for to credit ordinary and visible objects is not faith but perswasion.”

February 21, 2010

THE WORD WITH GOD

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
The same was in the beginning with God.

All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.
In him was life; and the life was the light of men.
And the light shineth in darkness;
and the darkness comprehendeth it not.

He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.
He came unto his own, and his own received him not.
But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God,
even to them that believe on his name:

And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory,
the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

The Resurrection

What is the Resurrection? John Donne, who reflects the thinking of many persons of his time—that is, the earlier seventeenth century—believed in a literal resurrection. The particular manner in which the decayed and dispersed bodies of the dead might someday be reassembled was an idea still alive (is it still so?) when he wrote this remarkable sonnet:

At the round earths imagin'd corners, blow
Your trumpets, Angells, and arise, arise
From death, you numberlesse infinities
Of soules, and to your scattred bodies goe,
All whom the flood did, and fire shall o'erthrow
All whom warre, dearth, age, agues, tyrannies,
Despaire, law, chance, hath slaine, and you whose eyes,
Shall behold God, and never tast deaths woe.
But let them sleepe, Lord, and mee mourne a space,
For, if above all these, my sinnes abound,
'Tis late to aske abundance of thy grace,
When wee are there; here on this lowly ground,
Teach mee how to repent; for that's as good
As if thou'hadst seal'd my pardon, with thy blood.

But I am perhaps advancing too far and too quickly to the significance of Jesus's Resurrection. Donne's understanding of the resurrection of the body at the second coming and the end of time, at the *parousia*, is swallowed up in his contemplation of his own present state: I need to know how to repent now, he says, for the last day is too late; and if I can be taught to know now, then I have learned the meaning of redemption and recognized Christ of the Resurrection. So Donne is looking at two different but intimately related concerns: What happens to the dead at the last coming—what, indeed, is the *state of the dead*—and moreover, how may one prepare for a Christian death? We shall return to these concerns later.

The familiar belief, evidently held by the first disciples, asserts that this mortal body is presently a hindrance to the soul's activity; yet the two—both body and soul— will be joined in the new dispensation obtained through Christ's risen body. In the traditional understanding of the Resurrection, matter triumphs over spirit. Accordingly, Jesus's actual buried body rose, leaving the tomb empty; but at the moment of the Resurrection it was transformed into a glorious and spiritual body, now part of the heavenly sphere and only temporarily accommodated to our mortal sight and our earthly conditions.

The corner-stone of Christian faith and theology rests upon the conviction that the Incarnation, and with that event the bodily death and Resurrection of Christ, are essential to the redemption of all mankind. The four Gospel accounts of the Resurrection disagree in many details, but they all respond to a particular event. Jesus in his humanity died, was buried, rose from the dead, leaving the tomb, and then appeared again. What happened to Jesus Christ in some way anticipates the Christian expectation, for as St. Paul claims (1 Cor. 15: 20), “Christ is risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept”; “he is the beginning, the first-born from the dead” (Col. 1: 18). He did not reappear as a resuscitated body, or one that has simply been repaired—as if one who might have suffered from broken bones—though he certainly retains the scars of his wounds. Much emphasis is put on his appearance in the Gospel accounts: Jesus is palpable, he “was seen,” he “was raised up”; and Thomas’s reluctance to believe unless he can “see” and “touch” Jesus makes him exclaim, once he is satisfied, “My Lord and my God!” (John 20: 28). And Jesus replies, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe” (v. 29).

There are inconsistencies in the various accounts of the Resurrection, whether preserved by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15, or by the Gospel writers. But precisely what happened is not, finally, the fundamental issue or meaning of the risen Christ. To think of the Resurrection only as an historical event is unsatisfactory; for the event, while undoubtedly historical and physically *real* and belonging to a particular time and place—just as the Incarnation—is also transcendent and mysteriously awesome. Christ is not just a restored Jesus, but the *Lord himself*. “The raised Christ was revealed rather than simply inspected or viewed, and revealed precisely in some transformed and glorified mode, so as to allow him to be experienced as God” (Peter Carnley, *The Structure of Resurrection Belief*, Oxford, Clarendon P, 1987, p. 24). The object of our faith is indeed the risen Christ, and, like the Incarnation, it becomes one continuous and continuing action. Again, Paul writes that “in him all the fulness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross” (Col. 1: 19–20).

Paul struggles to clarify the Resurrection in his first letter to the Corinthians—probably responding to the questions of these troublesome people and to some amongst them who denied the Resurrection. There are different kinds of bodies, he says, but the resurrection body is imperishable: “What is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable. . . . If there is a physical body, there is also a spiritual body.” And “just as we have borne the image of the man of dust [Adam], we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven [Christ]” (1 Cor. 15: 42, 44, 48). In Christ’s bodily resurrection, we may see our own, though in terms we cannot imagine —“Lo! I tell you a mystery,” says Paul (1 Cor. 15: 51). Indeed, “Our life is hidden in Christ with God” (Col. 3: 3). Christ has risen and his Resurrection is the sure promise of the bodily resurrection of those who are united with him. Because God became man in Christ, we are able to become like him, not as God, but as participants in God’s design and providence. Both the Incarnation and the Resurrec-

tion belong to a particular time and place. But there is no limitation of time or place in these events, for God is with us in his incarnate self, living, working suffering, dying, and rising again, who was seen, and who continues in glory still to be seen. In Christ's life, death and resurrection is contained humanity's joy and sorrow and triumph, and of God's accepting our weaknesses and forgiving them. What Christ performed for the first witnesses of his resurrection is the work he now performs also for us in our *confrontation* with his presence.

And so to return to Donne's sonnet and the problems he posed. What is the state of death? Have we intimated any answers? The four last things are traditionally described as "Death, Judgement, Heaven, Hell." What happens, then, when "the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed"? (1 Cor. 15: 52). It is much easier to address the second concern about penitence, and to take up perhaps Jeremy Taylor's *Holy Dying* (1651), where all of our daily actions are but preparatory to our death bed: "He that will die well and happily, must dress his soul by a diligent and frequent scrutiny: He must perfectly understand, and watch the state of his soul; he must set his house in order before he be fit to die. And for this there is great reason, and great necessity" (ed. Stanwood, Oxford, Clarendon P, 1989, p. 53).

We are left with many questions for discussion:

1. What happens to the body in the "state of death"? What happens to it at the second coming?
2. How is time apprehended by the resurrection body?
3. How may Heaven (and Hell) be described as a state, not a place?
4. Is there evolution and change in Heaven? Is this a place of continuous progress toward perfection?
5. Is there an intermediate state between death and the final judgement? (see Matthew 5 and 12) What is the meaning of "thy kingdom come"?

February 28, 2010



John Donne in his shroud, painted a few days before his death

The Trinity

TRINITY SUNDAY

Lord, who hast form'd me out of mud,
And hast redeem'd me through thy blood,
And sanctifi'd me to do good;

Purge all my sinnes done heretofore:
For I confesse my heavie score,
And I will strive to sinne no more.

Enrich my heart, mouth, hands in me,
With faith, with hope, with charitie;
That I may runne, rise, rest with thee.

George Herbert, *from The Temple* (1633)

“The strength of our faith is tried by those things wherein our wits and capacities are not strong. Howbeit because this divine mystery is more true than plain, divers having framed the same to their own conceits and fancies are found in their expositions thereof more plain than true.”

Richard Hooker, *from Lawes* (1597), V.52.1.

The Trinity, indeed, is the central dogma of the Christian faith, both familiar and mysterious. One must first of all recognise that ‘persons’ means something different in its older theological sense. ‘Persons’ are not to be understood in the contemporary or secular sense, and we must not think of the persons of the Trinity as corporeal or fleshly embodiments.

The term ‘Trinity’ was first used by Theophilus of Antioch in about AD 180. Obviously the term and the idea grew from the beginnings of the Christian faith. There is a scriptural adumbration, as the patristic Fathers urged, in the appearance to Abraham of the three men (Genesis 18), presumably divine figures or angels, foreshadowing the three-fold nature of God. In the New Testament, there are two obvious instances that evidently refer to the Trinity. One is at the end of Matthew (29: 19), and the other is the famous benediction in 2 Corinthians 13: 14: “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all,” helpfully glossed in the RSV: “The *grace of Christ* leads one toward the *love of God*, and the love of God when actualised through the *Spirit* produces *fellowship* with God and man.”

What, then, more fully speaking, is the Trinity? Hear Karl Rahner:

We . . . have to admit that the assertions about the Trinity in their catechetical formulations are almost unintelligible to people today, and that they almost inevitably occasion misunderstandings. . . . When in our secular use of language today we speak of one 'person' as distinct from another person, we can hardly avoid the notion that in order that they be persons and be different, there is in each of these persons its own free center of conscious and free activity which disposes of itself and differentiates itself from others, and that it is precisely this which constitutes a person.

But this notion of person is not applicable to our speaking of the divine Trinity, "the single and unique essence of God." His is a unicity of essence, and this "implies and includes the unicity of one single consciousness and one single freedom, although of course the unicity of one self-presence in consciousness and freedom in the divine Trinity remains determined by that mysterious threeness which we profess about God when we speak haltingly of the Trinity of persons in God" (Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, Seabury P, 1978, originally *Grundkurs des Glaubens*, 1976, pp. 134 - 35).

There has always been difficulty in describing the Trinity. In the early centuries, the so-called 'persons' were often distinguished on the basis of their particular functions towards the created universe. This view, called the "economic Trinity," urged by Tertullian and others, taught that the divine Word was part of God the Father's mind, then became a Person (so-to-speak) with the creation of the world, then the person of the Spirit occurred subsequently. These views are called also *subordinationism*, rather different from a further view that sees only one divine Person who acts in three different ways as creator, redeemer, sanctifier, an unorthodox view called "Modalism" whose chief proponent included Sabellius (thence 'Sabellianism,' or alternatively 'Monarchianism').

But the most important teaching on the Trinity is that of St. Augustine of Hippo (354-530), whose great work *De Trinitate* remains the most persistent of Trinitarian teachings of the Western church. Augustine elaborated a 'psychological theory of the Trinity' by comparing the divine life to human self-knowledge and self-love. and the Holy Spirit may be accounted for on the basis of the mutual love of the Father and the Son. A psychological theory of the Trinity, however, whereby one considers the inner life of God, or the *circumincession*, the interpenetration of the three persons, has difficulties; for this theory of the Trinity "neglects the experience of the Trinity in the economy of salvation." This is the view of Rahner, and of certain other twentieth-century theologians. We may better understand the Trinity in terms of 'immanence,' that is,

God communicates himself to his creation through grace and the Incarnation. . . . In both the collective and individual history of salvation there appears in immediacy to us

not some numinous powers or other which represent God, but there appears and is truly present the one God himself (Rahner, 136).

Some consideration or reference to the credal statements of the church must be noted, but most notably of Nicea (325), and also the later Athanasian Creed (after 428, and doubtfully attributed to St. Athanasius); both aim to condemn Arianism in their attempt to define the being of Christ in the hypostatic union. While the Nicene Creed is common to the universal church, one of its phrases has long been subject to controversy, and even schism. In the Creed familiar to us, we say that the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son (*filioque*, ‘the double procession’), a phrase that is omitted in the Orthodox statement of the Creed. The concern recalls the two words, *homoousion* / *homoiousion*. The first means ‘of one substance; the second ‘of like substance’ with the Father. The first is descriptive of consubstantiality, that is, the Father with the Son, while the second suggests a procession of one and then the other, evidently leaving more room for distinctions in the Godhead.

This “little letter” (a mere *iota*) defines an important distinction between the eastern and western Church, and it has been and remains a chief ground of attack by the Orthodox Church on the Church of Rome. Perhaps in the interest of ecumenicity, the Canadian *Book of Alternative Services* omits the troublesome clause in its Rite 2 of the Eucharistic liturgy. The Roman catechism continues to assert the traditional western view of the “double procession:”

for the eternal order of the divine persons in their consubstantial communion implies that the Father, as ‘the principle without principle,’ is the first origin of the Spirit, but also that as Father of the only Son, he is, with the Son the single principle from which the Holy Spirit proceeds (#248).

Truly, one may say that the reality of the Faith and of the Holy Trinity is not compromised through the *filioque* clause, or its omission.

And furthermore,

the Trinity is not a subtle theological and speculative game, but rather is an assertion which cannot be avoided... . God himself [is] the abiding and holy mystery, [and he is] the incomprehensible ground of man’s transcendent existence . . . not only the God of infinite distance, but also... the God of absolute closeness in a true self-communication, and he is present in this way in the spiritual depths of our existence as well as in the concreteness of our corporeal history” (Rahner, 137).

God, of course, is known to us in different ways, in three modes of presence, but he is continuously one and the same God.

What does John Donne say about the Trinity?

Since that God that created thee was *Verbum*, the Word, for The Word, (for, *Dixit, et facta sunt*, God spake, and all things were made) Since that God that redeemed thee was *Verbum*, The Word, (for therefore S. Basil calls the holy Ghost *Verbum Dei, quia interpres Filii*, He calls the holy Ghost the Word of God, because as the Son is the Word, because he manifests the Father unto us, so the holy Ghost is the Word, because he manifests the Son unto us, and enables us to apprehend, and apply to our selves, the promises of God in him) since God, in all the three Persons, is *Verbum*, The Word to thee, all of them working upon thee, by speaking to thee, Be thou *Verbum* too, A Word, as God was; A Speaking, and a Doing Word, to his glory, and edification of others” (Donne, on Revelation 4: 8 [Trinity Sunday, 1627], *Sermons*, ed. Potter and Simpson 8: 52).

Some conclusions and questions: The Trinity must indeed be regarded as *Verbum*, before all worlds, but Incarnate, and the Word ever present and speaking to us. At the same time, while we are conversing with the Trinity, we are living in God, in Christ, in the Spirit. We know the presence of one in the other. Perhaps the Trinity is one of those “wingy mysteries in Divinity” that defeats understanding; yet surely it is an effective way of declaring our faith in God’s love for us, and our love for him.

1. What happens if any one member of the Trinity is omitted? Why are we always invoking the Trinity?
2. Can we have Christianity without the Trinity?
3. Why do some people say that Christians worship three gods? How do the “gifts” of the Spirit relate to God and the Son?
4. All members of the Trinity are divine, yet one of them also took human form. Also, we say that the Holy Spirit exists not through generation, but *spiration*. Does the Trinity exist in eternity?

March 7, 2010

The Atonement

Now that we have considered the Incarnation, the Resurrection, and the Trinity, we may turn to the doctrine of the Atonement—or better to say, the doctrine of salvation, or *soteriology*, and consider the divine purpose and plan of Christ in the world, in our Trinitarian lives. First a poignant summary of the Trinity by Julian of Norwich, the late 14th century religious and mystic. From *Showings* (Paulist P, 1978, p. 181):

[T]he Trinity is God, God is the Trinity. The Trinity is our maker, the Trinity is our protector, the Trinity is our everlasting lover, the Trinity is our endless joy and our bliss, by our Lord Jesus Christ and in our Lord Jesus Christ. . . . For where Jesus appears the blessed Trinity is understood . . . I was greatly astonished by this wonder and marvel, that he who is so to be revered and feared would be so familiar with a sinful creature living in this wretched flesh.

Because of our sinful nature, we are redeemed through the Trinity on account of Christ's work of salvation, through his death on the cross, commonly understood as a "sacrifice." We are made righteous in God's sight, that is, we are justified, vindicated, made whole—this is the sense of "justification." The magisterial reformers, notably Luther and Calvin, insisted that justification is an act of God, that nothing man can do will change God's desire. Salvation is the end of what one desires, by justification, amplified or accompanied by sanctification. And sanctification refers to a present holiness, achieved through good works.

These extremely subtle issues, that is, the need for salvation and the reason for the Cross, were hotly debated in much of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, with the Church of Rome rejecting the reformers' belief in free grace, urging that man must cooperate with God, that justification does not come by faith alone, or by grace alone. These difficult formulations owe much, of course, to varying interpretations of St. Paul, writing in Romans 2: 13; 5: 1ff.; 8: 33, and elsewhere, such as 1 Corinthians 1:18 and 1 Corinthians 15. The Christian faith is unequivocally clear about at least one thing: the Passion and the Death of Jesus on the Cross; for the Cross and what it means is the foundation of our faith. In the absence of any formal or "official" statement in orthodox or traditional Christianity about the Atonement, we must ask what the Cross means. How does it act in the work of salvation and redemption, suggested by the Trinity?

I want to suggest at least four meanings or ways of understanding the Cross, common in Christian discourse, though of course there is some overlapping and merging of the different views. Christ's work as saviour and redeemer who died on the cross for our salvation may be regarded as (1) a sacrifice, (2) a victory, (3) a sign of forgiveness, or (4) as a moral example.

The first sense is very familiar. We are accustomed to think of Christ's death on the cross as a sacrificial offering, a form of sacrifice that accomplishes in a full way what various Old Testament blood sacrifices could only intimate. Much of the epistle to Hebrews is concerned with the sacrifice of Christ as the one complete offering to God: Christ "entered once for all into the Holy Place, taking not the blood of goats and calves but his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption . . . he is the mediator of a new covenant" (Hebrews 9: 11, 15). St. Augustine develops these ideas, describing Christ as both victim and priest, who offered himself up as a sacrifice for our sins. So Christ comes to be regarded as prophet, priest, king, and is so described in much of the theological writing and preaching of the late 1500s and early 1600s. This sense of sacrifice is contained in the familiar prayer of consecration, that Christ suffered death upon the cross for our redemption "by his one oblation of himself once offered, a full, perfect and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world," and our Anglo-Catholic sacramental theology, like that of the Roman church, regards the eucharist as a sacrifice.

The early church also emphasised the victorious Christ, who through his cross and resurrection triumphed over sin and death, and Satan's false kingdom amongst us. Christ is the victor; his Passion might be seen as a ransom by which we are liberated. Christ is offering a payment to get us out of our bondage. Certain of the Patristic fathers developed this theme by asking, Who was being paid the ransom? Surely God needed no payment, so clearly Satan or the devil must be receiving the ransom. Thus Christ might be seen as a victor over the devil, and even managed the "harrowing of hell," an immensely popular belief throughout much of the medieval period. The concept of Christ as Victor, however, has taken on a less literal significance in modern theology, where an emphasis is placed upon Christ's victory as the creation of a new and victorious life in us, and in our own human situation.

A further approach concentrates on the cross as the ultimate act of forgiveness, principally associated with St. Anselm of Canterbury (ca. 1033–1109), whose *Cur Deus Homo?* (1098) is one of the most important and influential of theological works on the Atonement. He dismissed the notion of the devil having any rights, and thus any claim to a ransom. Anselm concentrates on the redemption— with the absolutely essential need for the Incarnation because humanity had fallen from the blessed state in which God had created it. Some satisfaction for this loss was needed, and God therefore became man in order to render through his life and death the necessary recompense. Christ is thus representative of humanity, which participates in his death on the cross and his rising again. So it seems that Christ—the God-Man—is our substitute, who is crucified in our place in order to satisfy God. One can easily see how Anselm's theory of the Atonement would in later years become highly legalistic and juridical. Since we are unable because of our feeble and fallen nature to make good our indebtedness to God, Christ offers the sacrificial ransom on our behalf, and so settles our relationship with God. Guilt, Judgement, Forgiveness—with a strongly substitutionary theme—are the marks of the Anselmian doctrine, greatly and complicatedly elaborated in our time by Karl Barth in his *Church Dogmatics*.

Finally, the cross may be seen as a moral example, a view commonly associated with Peter Abelard (1079–1142/43). While much of his thinking reflects the traditional understanding of Christ's death as a sacrifice for sin, Abelard emphasises the extent of God's love for us through the cross, which should necessarily invoke in us a loving response. The impact of Christ's death elicits deep sympathy and love—its effect is largely subjective. Our redemption occurs through the love shown for us through the Passion, and that event sets us free and gains for us liberty through love.

These ideas were to become the theological basis for many persons in the period of the Enlightenment, seemingly enabling them to minimise the transcendent value of the cross, of the idea of sacrifice, of the paying a penalty for sin. Christ thus becomes just another human being, different from us only in the degree of his superior qualities. Christ is merely dying, as any one of us, with no impact upon the generality of humanity. The cross becomes a model or moral example, demonstrating simply the love of God toward us. These ideas lead us into moral improvement, urging us to emulate Jesus's lifestyle. Abelard would certainly not have wished to go so far, but these are the modern outcomes of the exemplarist approach to the cross. The idea of sin and divine punishment, or redemption, is very weak in the exemplarist approach, and it ignores the Incarnation. It is inadequate, too, in view of the terrible evils of the world wars, of the Holocaust, and the many and continuing atrocities of our time.

The doctrine of salvation, of the Atonement, has exercised the subtlest minds throughout the Christian era. I have suggested some of the ways in which soteriological thinking has been expressed. And now some questions.

1. From what are we saved?
2. Is it necessary for us to think about salvation at all?
3. Is humanity essentially good?
4. What is the relationship of the Incarnation to the Passion—the Cross?
5. Could you assess and comment on the importance of one of the approaches to the Atonement described here?
6. There is a strand of thinking about God that suggests an emptying (*kenosis*) of Christ, and a kind of divine self-limitation. Dietrich Bonhoeffer expressed the idea in this way:

God lets himself be pushed out of the world on to the cross. He is weak and powerless in the world, and that is precisely the way, the only way, in which he is with us and helps us . . . The Bible directs us to God's powerlessness and suffering; only the suffering God can help.

How may this idea be reconciled with any of the views of the Atonement previously described?

7. What view of the Atonement does George Herbert express in this poem?

Redemption.

Having been tenant long to a rich Lord,
Not thriving, I resolved to be bold,
And make a suit unto him, to afford
A new small-rented lease, and cancel th'old.
In heaven at his manour I him sought:
They told me there, that he was lately gone
About some land, which he had dearly bought
Long since on earth, to take possession.
I straight return'd, and knowing his great birth,
Sought him accordingly in great resorts;
In cities, theatres, gardens, parks, and courts:
At length I heard a ragged noise and mirth
Of thieves and murderers: there I him espied,
Who straight, *Your suit is granted*, said, and died.

March 14, 2010

The Church

In this series of reflections on several doctrines of the Christian faith, we have proceeded in a logical sequence: Incarnation was and is first, for all that we know must have a beginning, and for us that is the Word made flesh, coming to dwell among us. There was a birth, and then a death, but a resurrection—we travelled from Christmas to Easter. And then the outpouring of the Holy Spirit continues the work of that continuing birth in the unity of the Holy Trinity, and offers to us redemption and salvation in the Atonement. From last week's discussion of this soteriological theme, we come finally to the place where we are taught and where we worship: *ecclesiology*, or the doctrine of the Church.

I wish to review what the church is— in history, in context, in its visible and invisible forms, and further to comment on the creedal declaration of our belief in “one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church,” and so at last to attempt a description of how Anglicanism variously understands itself in these roles. Today I hope to offer an especial Anglican twist to our ecclesiological deliberations.

So what sort of body is the church? In the first centuries, there was little concern about defining it. In secular Greek *ekklesia* refers to an assembly, or a community of self-governing citizens, as in the Septuagint reference in Acts 7: 38, which recalls the Hebrew congregation mentioned in Deuteronomy 23: 3. The Latin term *ecclesia* and all its derivatives referred originally to a building. That is the sense of Acts 19: 39, and this is the intention in Paul's epistles for a local Christian community (see Galatians 1: 2, and 1 Thessalonians 1:1), and also for the whole Christian community (see 1 Corinthians 12: 28). Yet it is clear that the early Church did not see itself as a voluntary association of individuals, but rather as a faithful remnant of God's people awaiting the return of Christ and the *parousia*, all as part of universal history (see Matthew 28: 19: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations . . . I am with you always, to the close of the age”).

The early church thus had no interest in ecclesiology, for it saw itself as a wide and all embracing spiritual society of the New Covenant, replacing Israel of the Old Testament, with all Christians being one in Christ. Such a society or gathering might through the ‘church’ acknowledge true Christian teaching for all the faithful. Rivalries developed between different jurisdictions, with centers in Alexandria, Antioch, Constantinople, Jerusalem, and Rome. With the political ascendancy of the Roman empire, Rome naturally became preeminent, and its bishop particularly important—one sees already in these first centuries what would become a division, and eventually, a schism between the western and eastern churches. Supported but also with much misgiving by some in the east, many in the west appealed to the martyrdom in Rome of Peter, and the apparent authority given to him by Christ in Matthew 16: 18: “You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church.” One notes, incidentally, that the term “poppe,” derived from the

Latin *papa* (*father*) was in the early church the common designation for all Christian bishops, but it would in time come to designate only the bishop of Rome. But Richard Field (1561–1616), in his learned work *Of the Church* (1606), offers a useful, general description:

The *Church* is the multitude and number of those, whom Almighty God severeth from the rest of the world by the work of his grace, and calleth to the participation of eternal happiness. . . . So that it is the work of *grace*, and the heavenly call, that give being to the Church, and make it a different society from all other companies . . . in the world, that have no other light of knowledge, nor motion of desire, but that which is natural; whence, for distinction from them, it is named *Ecclesia*, a multitude called out. (Book 1, chap. 1, sig. A6r).

Christian doctrine seems to develop through controversy, and so it was with the Donatist controversy. During the persecution of the Roman emperor Diocletian in about 303, with the order that Christian books should be destroyed and churches demolished, some Christian leaders handed over their books, and they were styled *traditores*. But other leaders were outraged. After the conversion of Constantine and the Edict of Milan in 313, factions arose. Those who opposed the *traditores* refused to acknowledge the authority of their bishop, Caecilian of Carthage, along with Donatus, their leader—for they had given up their books, and not remained faithful. But Cyprian of Carthage had earlier denounced any kind of schism. The Donatists held that they, and not their ‘Catholic’ opposition, were legitimate upholders of the faith, so Caecilian could rightfully function as a bishop. When Augustine of Hippo arrived in the region he rejected the arguments of the Donatists and came down on the side of Cyprian. Like Cyprian, Augustine condemned schism, and he upheld the validity of any bishop’s sacramental ability, irrespective of his moral character. One can see how Augustine’s sense of the church would be echoed in the centuries to come, especially in the Reformation period.

In the early sixteenth century, Luther and the reformers of his day still saw the church as one, but he regarded the center of the Gospel to be defined by grace, by justification by faith alone, a doctrine not taught by the Catholic church. Luther probably had no desire to leave the Roman Catholic church, for he saw his work as a temporary measure. This was all to change after 1541 with the so-called Colloquy of Regensburg. Calvin, in his generation, urged that the true church is marked simply by the necessity of preaching the Word of God, and the need for properly administering the sacraments. The visible church exists wherever these criteria occur. And so the church is a divinely constituted body within which God effects sanctification of the elect. Calvin, indeed, accords great space, much of Book IV of the *Institutes*, to the doctrine of the Church. He famously states near the opening of his work:

I shall start, then, with the church, into whose bosom God is pleased to gather his sons, not only that they may be nourished by her help and ministry as long as they are infants

and children, but also that they may be guided by her motherly care until they mature and at last reach the goal of faith. “For what God has joined together, it is not lawful to put asunder” [Mark 10: 9], so that, for those to whom he is Father the church may also be Mother. And this was so not only under the law but also after Christ’s coming, as Paul testifies when he teaches that we are the children of the new and heavenly Jerusalem [Galatians 4: 26].

Calvin is quoting from Cyprian, who declared in *On the Unity of the Catholic Church*, that “You cannot have God for your Father unless you have the church for your Mother.”

The notes or marks of the church, expressed in the Nicene Creed—*one, holy, catholic, and apostolic*—are readily accommodated in these Reformation views. Cyprian was writing in response to the persecution of Diocletian and urging the unity of the church. And the reformers, like Calvin, were able to see the meaning of “oneness” in the Church, for as a spiritual entity the Church may exist apart from the Catholic tradition. Unity or oneness must be understood in theological terms; wherever Christ is, there is the Church. The Reformation obviously set the stage for denominationalism, which continues into our own day, with many curious and remarkable manifestations. But we shall see in a moment the particular situation of Anglicanism in this early reform movement.

What of the other marks of the church? The church cannot be *holy* in the common sense of the word, for it has always included sinners and saints; and, as we have seen, it has been fraught by controversy, factionalism, and sinfulness. But ‘holy’ better recalls the theoretical or ultimate calling of the church’s members, who would *become* holy in the sight of God, and in the heavenly life of Christ. The holiness of the church is not a moral concept, therefore, but a theological one, and one that has an eschatological significance.

The church is *catholic*, which means universal, general, or all-embracing. This is its earliest sense, and it is the one most commonly understood today. Local churches belong to the totality of Christendom, and form part of the unity that exists in Christ. The term *apostolic* reminds us that the church is founded on the witness and testimony of the apostles of the New Testament. The church is commissioned by Christ to the Apostles, and thence to all of us who continue the mission of the church.

Now the English Church (*Ecclesia Anglicana*), which we call here the Anglican Church of Canada, formerly known as the Church of England in Canada, and generally known throughout the world as *Anglicanism*, as we know, was affected by the Reform movements of the sixteenth century. But the English Church is not confessional in the sense of having a specific set of beliefs, dogmas, or ideological texts as Lutheranism or Calvinism. The Book of Common Prayer, the 39 articles, and the Canons Ecclesiastical of 1604 were intended to present the convictions of the Elizabethan

church during its formative years. Henry's marriage problems may have encouraged reforms, though Elizabeth's desire for peace and avoidance of controversy was much more important to the English church. The theological situation was well in place by 1558, when Elizabeth began her long reign (to 1603). There was a firm sense that the Church of England had a continuous history reaching back to Augustine of Canterbury and to the Patristic Fathers; moreover, the Church should, it was felt, become more biblically oriented, but never in a way that might break this continuity of faith and history; and finally, abuses might be corrected, but nothing of value should be abandoned, so long as scripture was not contradicted, with much left open to continuing study and evaluation by the Christian community. The Church of England was Reformed but still definitely Catholic. But Anglicanism would have its own vocation, and with it an emerging doctrine of the Church.

This task would fall especially to Richard Hooker (1554–1600), whose patron was John Whitgift, Elizabeth's Archbishop of Canterbury (from 1583). Hooker, I think undoubtedly the greatest and most seminal of English theologians, set forth the direction of church government in his magisterial *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* (1593, 1597; 1662). With respect to ecclesiology, Hooker rests his argument on the distinction between “that Church of Christ which we properly term his body mysticall . . . and this visible Church . . . but one, continued from the first beginning of the world to the last end” (III.1). Further, *participation* is a key idea in Hooker, and he is careful to link it with his understanding of the Church:

We are . . . in God through Christ eternally according to that intent and purpose whereby we were chosen to be made his in this present world before the world itself was made; we are in God through the knowledge which is had of us and the love which is borne towards us from everlasting. . . . For his Church he knoweth and loveth, so that they which are in the Church are thereby known to be in him. . . . (V.56.7)

Participation in Christ is achieved most efficaciously through sacramental unity with him, and this enables us to be part of his Church. Therefore, we understand:

The Church is in Christ as Eve was in Adam. Yea by grace we are every[one] of us in Christ and in his Church, as by nature we are in those our first parents . . . And [God's] Church he frameth out of the very flesh, the very wounded and bleeding side of the Son of Man. (Ibid.)

The visible church for Hooker is much more than a particular body that preaches the Gospel; the Church possesses a divine aspect that enables us to participate in God's transformative power:

It is of necessity that as well present sanctification unto newness of life, as the future restoration of our bodies should presuppose a participation of the grace efficacy merit or

virtue of his body and blood, without which foundation first laid there is no place for those other operations of the Spirit of Christ to ensue. (V.56.10)

For Hooker the Church visible and the Church invisible are mystically, sacramentally united. This doctrine of the Church is unusual in its avoidance of Reformation (and other) controversies, and it is Anglican—to a very *high* degree.

Questions.

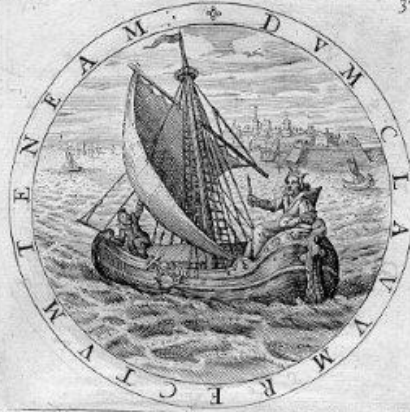
1. What issues are at stake in describing or defining the doctrine of the church?
2. Augustine of Hippo wrote of the Christian church being like a hospital. What did he mean?

March 21, 2010



Hes that his Course directly Steeres,
Nor Stormes, nor Windy. Centures feares.

37.



ILLVSTR. XXXVII.

Book. I.

Were the Sea, this World may well compare ;
For, ev'ry Man which liveth in the same,
Is as a Pilot, to some Vessel there,
Of little size, or else of larger frame.

Some, have the Beasts of their owne Life to guide,
Some, of whole Families doe row the Barge,
Some, governe petty Towneships too, beside,
(To those compar'd, which of small Barkes have charge)
Some others, rule great Provinces ; and, they
Resemble Captaines of huge Argosies ;
But, when of Kingdomes, any gayne the Sway,
To Generalls of Fleets, we liken these.

Each hath his proper Course to him assign'd,
His Card, his Compasse, his due Tackings, too ;
And, if their Businesse, as they ought, they mind,
They may accomplish all they have to doe.
But, most Men leave the Care of their owne Course,
To judge or follow others, in their wayes ;
And, when their Follies make their Fortunes worke,
They curse the Destin, which they should prayse.
For, Waves, and Windes, and that oft-changing Weather
Which many blame, as cause of all their Losse,
(Though they observe it not) Helpe bring together
Those Hopes, which their owne Wisdome, often crosses.
Regard not, therefore much, what those things be,
Which come, without thy fault, to thwart thy Way ;
Nor, how, Rasse-Lookers-on will censure thee ;
But, faithfully, to doe thy part, assay :

For, if thou shalt not from this Counsell vary,
Let my Hopes faile me, if thy Hopes miscarry.

A sudden

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