

The Parish Paper

OF

ST. JOHN'S CHURCH

SAVANNAH, GEORGIA

Vol. 45 No. 34

The Fourth Sunday after Trinity

July 13, 2014

ARTICLES OF RELIGION V

"Incomprehensible"?

The Doctrine of the Trinity

Following the prophets of Israel, the first Article of Religion establishes what God is *not*: not many but one, not time-bound but everlasting, not limited in power, wisdom, or goodness, not bound by body, parts, or passions, not made or preserved but maker and preserver of all things. Thus does it liberate us from the straitjackets of the finite. But then, without compromising this testimony, the Article moves beyond it: "*in the unity of this Godhead there be three persons of one substance, power, and eternity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost*".

Though the specialized terminology may seem dry and technical, here is the uniquely Christian doctrine of God, the touchstone of Christian orthodoxy, and the beginning point for all faithful thinking as a Christian. That God is one, and beyond all images that human ingenuity can devise - this may be known naturally, and is indeed confessed by other religions and philosophies. But that within the divine unity there should be a distinction of persons, this can only be known by God's own self-disclosure in the Word made flesh. (Significantly, the first Article on the Trinity is immediately followed by the second, "Of the Word or Son of God which was made very man".)

The teaching of the Trinity is entirely biblical. No reader can finish a page of the New Testament without running into some aspect of it, and in many places it is pervasive. (See for instance St. John's account of Jesus' discourses at the Last Supper, chapters 13-17.) Notoriously, however, the terminology of the doctrine is not biblical but patristic, developed by the early Church from the language of Greek philosophy and Roman law, and made official by the councils of the 4th and 5th centuries.

Precisely because these terms are used of God, it is easier to say what they do *not* mean than what they mean. (This is true of all rigorous speech about God.) First, the "persons" are not modes of God's existence (ice, water, vapour). Nor are they phases of God's activity in cosmic or human history (creation, redemption, sanctification) - for Jesus of Nazareth identified himself as the Son, called upon God as Father, and promised the Holy Spirit as "another comforter". Jesus is not talking to himself when he prays to the Father; nor is he speaking about himself, when he promises to send the Spirit. The persons are distinct.

Second, the New Testament constantly speaks of them in equal terms. Christ charged the apostles to "baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy

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The Rt. Rev. Scott Benhase..... Bishop of Georgia
The Rev. Gavin G. DunbarRector
1 West Macon Street 31401(912) 234-2209
The Rev. Craig E. O'Brien..... Priest Associate
423 E. Gaston Street 31401(912) 308-4441
The Rev. Dr. Jeremy W. Bergstrom Priest Assistant
5 Autumn Leaves Court 31410(912) 656-3807
Mrs. Janice W. Woods Business Manager
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President, Men of St. John's..... Mr. John C. Helmken II

Church Office(912) 232-1251
Fax.....(912) 232-5559
Parish House(912) 233-3845
Cranmer Hall(912) 232-8887
E-mails (firstinitiallastname)@stjohnsav.org

STANDING NOTICES

The occasional Sacraments of Baptism, Matrimony, Penance, Communion and Unction of the Sick, and the Office of Burial of the Dead are always available by appointment, at announced times, or as necessary.

HOSPITAL VISITATIONS

Please call the Church Office to inform the clergy if you or a loved one is in the hospital.

ST. JOHN'S WEB SITE

Parish Paper essays may be read on our web site: www.stjohnsav.org

VESTRY OFFERING CHAIRMEN

8:00 a.m. Mr. Arthur D. Weed
10:30a .m. Mr. Floyd G. Whittington, Jr.

USHER CHAIRMAN

Mr. John D. Riley

The flowers at the altar are given to the glory of God and in loving memory of Robert V Martin, Jr., by his family;
and in loving memory of Mr. and Mrs. Howard John Hoffman, by Mr. and Mrs. E. Brian Culver and Mr. and Mrs. Randolph Bryan Jones, Jr.;

and in loving memory of Mary Elizabeth Vinyard Sapp on the occasion of the 99th anniversary of her birth July 5th, 1915, by Bob and Frankie Vinyard;

in loving memory of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas D. Miller, Sr. and Mrs. Louise Duskin Dillard, by Mr. and Mrs. William E. Dillard III.

...and in memory of the Revd' Addison Dawson Teague, interim priest at St. John's from September 1969 to June 1970, who died July 2nd, 2014, in Augusta.

CHANCEL SOCIETY

Mrs. Carter C. Hubbard, Sr., Mrs. Jayne G. Holland
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Mrs. T. Herbert Guerry III, Mrs. Robert A. Bumett
Mrs. Joseph R. Ross, Mrs. John K. Ross
Mrs. Jonathan C. Glen

ACOLYTES

8:00
10:30 Hawkins Pindar
Finn Repella, Edwin Shepherd

COFFEE HOUR CHAIRMAN

The Women of Saint John's

ADULT EDUCATION SUNDAY 9:30 A.M.

St. John's Gospel Fr. Dunbar, Reading Room

MEN'S WEEKDAY STUDY & DISCUSSION

Thursday 7 a.m., Samuel, Fr. Dunbar, Reading Rm

PARISH KALENDAR THIS WEEK

Monday to Friday

Morning and Evening Prayer
8:15 a.m. & 5:30 p.m.

In addition, on Wednesday

9:45 a.m. *Litany*
10 a.m. *Sung Eucharist*

In addition, on Friday, July 18th

St. CAMILLUS DE LELLIS
Fr Dunbar's ordination anniversary
5:30 p.m. *Evening Prayer & Holy Communion*

Summer office hours through Labor Day
Monday Through Thursday: 9:00 to 4:30
Friday 9:00 to 12 noon

PLEASE REMEMBER YOUR CHURCH IN YOUR WILL

Ghost” - grouping together three persons without inequality, in the same saving power of one divine name. Likewise, St. Paul attributes a great blessing to each of the three, without hint of inequality: “the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost, be with you all evermore”. And when St. John says that the Word “was in the beginning with God”, he indicates that their co-equality is also co-eternity. In this Trinity of persons there is no greater or less, but all three persons are co-eternal and co-equal.

The hardest thing for modern Christians to grasp is that the persons are not separate individual centers of consciousness – which is what the word “person” means to us. But God is not a committee (although we sometimes speak of him as such). And thus the Trinity cannot be reduced (as current fashion would have it) to a paradigm of human community – which would make it just another way of talking about *us* instead of God.

We do not worship three gods, but one. It was to guard the unity of the Godhead that the Council of Nicea introduced the word *homoousios* to the Creed - "being of one substance with the Father". This means: whatever God the Father is, the Son also is - except that the Father is 'made of none', and the Son is 'made of none, nor created but begotten'. Moreover, whatever the Father is, and the Son is, the Spirit also is - except that the Spirit is not made or begotten but proceeds from the Father and the Son. The persons are distinguished by their relations to

each other, nothing else. The substance of God is fully present in each of them: each person is an eternal principle of subsistence in the one Godhead. "And so the Father is God, the Son God, the Holy Ghost God; and yet there are not three Gods but one God."

One of the classical statements of Trinitarian doctrine has been parodied as: "the Father incomprehensible, the Son incomprehensible, the whole darn thing incomprehensible". It is an understandable response: yet what drives this way of speaking about God is not a taste for mystification, but the attempt to think as rigorously and coherently as possible about God as he has revealed himself in the Word made flesh, Jesus Christ. “Through God alone may God be known”. How can God be revealed in something other than God or less than God? "I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images" (Isaiah 42:8). If God is truly known in his Word, then his Word is truly God; and if the Word is truly known through his Spirit, then the Spirit is God. The doctrine is not about shrink-wrapping the mystery of God (“God in a box”) but precisely the opposite: enabling the finite mind humbly and faithfully to confess and worship his infinite glory. GGD

BAZAAR/RUMMAGE SALE STORAGE

Storage is available for donations to the Bazaar and Rummage Sale. For information on access to the storage unit, please call the church office.

8:00 A.M. – HOLY COMMUNION

COLLECTS, EPISTLE, and GOSPEL..... Prayer Book, p. 194

A continental breakfast is available in Cranmer Hall following this service.

9:30-12:00 (Noon)—Nursery (*Cranmer Hall*)

9:30-10:15 A.M.—ADULT CHRISTIAN EDUCATION (*Cranmer Hall*)

9:30 a.m. – Noon—Preschool-Kindergarten Summer Program

(*Cranmer Hall –activities for children during the 9:30 education and/or 10:30 service times*)

10:30 A.M. – SUNG EUCHARIST & ADDRESS

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Address Fr. O ' Brien

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ORGAN: "*Little*" *Prelude and Fugue in G Major* J. S. Bach

Everyone is invited to attend Coffee Hour in the Green Meldrim House immediately after the 10:30 service.

If you are a guest and visiting our Parish, please make yourself known.

12 Noon —HOLY COMMUNION (Church) - as 8 a.m.