

# The Centurion

The Parish Magazine of St. Alban's Church

1011 Old Joppa Road, Joppa, Maryland, 21085



My dear People:

This month we wrap up our series on the classic book by Harry Blamires called 'The Christian Mind.' This book was required reading at Covenant College (Lookout Mountain, GA) where I attended for a few years a long, long time ago. Although it was written in 1963 it is still as timely as ever. I do hope these articles encourage you to purchase the book and give it a read. At 181 pages it is quite manageable, and Blamires' lucid style makes it easy to digest. The reason why I wanted to dive into it is because many Christians do not quite understand the extent to which secularization has overrun the Church and poisoned our own way of thinking. Blamires argues that there is a Christian mind, which is to say there is a Christian way of thinking about life and the world. The problem is that we Christians often forget that! We forget about God a lot of the time; we don't really believe that there is good and bad, true and false; we don't believe in any authority external to us... our own subjective feelings are all that matters and are the only thing that is real; and there is not anything special and important about being a human. Blamires addresses all of these, arguing that the Christian mind has a supernatural orientation, an awareness of evil, a conception of truth, an acceptance of authority, a concern for the person, and (finally) a sacramental cast. This last one we will look in this issue of *The Centurion* on page 2. So many of our problems in life begin in the mind. How a person thinks affects how he acts, and how he acts affects how he lives, and how he lives affects how those around him live. A University of Chicago professor summed all of this up very simply in the title of his very important book of 1948: 'Ideas Have Consequences.' Anyone who thinks that ideas do not have consequences simply hasn't read enough. The consequences of Marxism, for example, led to millions of deaths in the 20th century in Europe, Asia, and elsewhere. The secular ideas that permeate our culture and poison Christian minds—however benign they might seem to us—are actually quite dangerous, especially as more and more people adopt them. They often present themselves in the form of cynical aphorisms that we've all heard before, or perhaps have even uttered ourselves: "All is fair in love and war. The nice guy finishes last. You only live once." Most bad ideas, of course, don't come with pithy sayings, but are nonetheless still noxious to the person and society. These include the notion that there is no absolute truth (i.e. truth is relative), love is all that matters in a relationship, etc. All ideas have consequences. What we believe and how we think matters, and can have rippling effects on us and society. As Christians we want to think as God would have us think, and view all of life through a biblical, Christian lens. To think Christianly we must be conversant in the Holy Scriptures and Tradition of the Church, and live lives of worship and devotion to almighty God, enthroning him in our hearts and souls. And that is a good idea!

Faithfully, your priest, *J. Gordon Anderson*

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IN THIS ISSUE:

**Theology, p. 2**

*The Christian Mind - Part 6*

**Historical Theology p. 3**

*Anglican Eucharistic Theology*

**Parish News, p. 4**

*Updates from St. Alban's*

UPCOMING HOLY DAYS:

**Aug 15th - Assumption of the BVM**

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

**Aug 24th - St. Bartholomew**

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

**Sep 8th - Nativity of the BVM**

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

**Sep 21st - St. Matthew**

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

**Sep 23rd - Ember Friday**

**Sep 29th - St. Michael**

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

**Oct 18th - St. Luke**

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

**Oct 28th - Ss. Simon & Jude**

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

**Nov 1st - All Saints**

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

**Nov 2nd - All Souls**

Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.

THEOLOGY: *The Christian Mind (Part 6) — Its Sacramental Cast*

This month we wrap up our look at Harry Blamires' famous book "The Christian Mind" (SPCK, 1963) in which he argues that there is a specifically Christian way of thinking about and approaching life. Last month we looked at the Christian mind's concern for the person. The last aspect of the Christian mind that we look at is its sacramental cast.

Blamires writes, "*The Christian mind thinks sacramentally. The Christian Faith presents a sacramental view of life. It shows life's positive richness as derivative from the supernatural. It teaches us that to create beauty or to experience beauty, to recognize truth or to discover truth, to receive love or to give love, is to come into contact with realities which express the Divine Nature. At a time when Christianity is so widely misrepresented as life-rejecting rather than life-affirming, it is urgently necessary to right the balance.*" (p. 163)

Blamires is alluding to what was later dubbed by theologians as "the sacramental principle." This principle affirms that God uses physical things to communicate his grace and life to us. He does this because he created us as physical, embodied beings. This principle is obviously rooted in the sacraments (especially Baptism and Holy Eucharist). Hence the phrase "sacramental principle." We note here that the Catechism definition of a sacrament is "*an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace given unto us; ordained by Christ himself, as a means whereby we receive the same, and a pledge to assure us thereof.*" (BCP, p. 581)

So what Blamires is saying is that to the Christian mind the whole world is, in a sense, sacramental. Like the Holy Sacraments, there are elsewhere in this world outward appearances that point to and often convey deeper spiritual truths, which ultimately lead us to God. Our environment and world—indeed the whole universe, and all that it contains—is a window into the divine. *It itself* is not divine (the error of pantheism). Rather, it is a *window into* the divine. It shows forth God. As Psalm 19:1 says, "*The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork.*" And Romans 1:20 says, "*For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead.*"

For the Christian, the events of life and the things of this world are not empty, random phenomena. Instead they are pregnant with deep meaning and purpose. The smallest creature, all the way up to the largest, was ordained by God to exist and serve him in some unique way. The Christian should seek to find joy

and happiness in the world, and in the brief time God has given him here, knowing that this transitory and fallen world still bears the marks of its Maker, and is still the means used by him to make us holy and prepare us for the fullness of life—eternal life in the new heavens and new earth. Indeed, the Christian mind sees the world and all of life and existence as pregnant with meaning and divine purpose.

This means, as Blamires says, that Christianity is not an escapist, life-rejecting religion. Quite the opposite. And history proves his point. The greatest intellectual, artistic, and scientific endeavors of the Occident—and indeed the world—were created or discovered by Christians who were seeking a greater knowledge and love of God.

The great 20th century theologian, E.L. Mascall, made the interesting point in one of his books that as knowledge and love of God declines, so does love and care for the environment and nature. (N.B. He made this point some thirty years before the rise of the modern 'environmentalist' movement.) The reason for this is exactly what Blamires is writing about in this section. The experience of beauty in creation helps us apprehend God, and the apprehension of God leads us to experience beauty in creation. Thus, when we forget one we forget the other. Therefore, as society has become more secular and technocratic, is it any wonder that the environment has suffered?

We see in the creation stories that God created the whole world and pronounced it to be good. We also see that he created mankind in his own image and likeness to tend the garden, and take care of his wonderful creation. God gave Adam and Eve dominion over the rest of creation (Gen. 1:26-31), but it was to be a dominion of love and service, as we see in Adam naming the different creatures that God created. (Gen. 2:18-25) When fellowship with God is broken because of the sin of Adam and Eve, not only is mankind cursed, but all of creation falls and becomes accursed with him. (Genesis 3)

All of that is just another way of illustrating the intimate connection between mankind and the rest of the creation. And so when Jesus is raised from the dead, all of creation looks forward to redemption in him, and being made new in him at the end of time. God in the meantime uses the things of this flawed and fallen world to point us to him, and to communicate his grace to us. So, to the Christian, the whole world and universe is sacramental... an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace. ✠

HISTORICAL THEOLOGY: *Anglican Eucharistic Doctrine*

**D**uring my recent vacation I read two fascinating books by the Rev'd C.W. Dugmore (1909-1990): 'The Mass and the English Reformers' (1958), and 'Eucharistic Doctrine in England from Hooker to Waterland.' (1942)

In these books Dugmore—who founded the Ecclesiastical History Society, and the *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*—studies the development of the doctrine of the Holy Eucharist in the English Church. He demonstrates that the Church of England had its own original eucharistic theology and did not copy the ideas of continental Reformers such as Luther, Calvin, and Zwingli, and their followers.

That the English Reformers such as Cranmer and Ridley appear to take ideas from these men (especially Calvin) is due to the fact that all of the Reformers—English and continental—were trying to return to a more patristic understanding of the Holy Eucharist, relying especially the teaching of St. Augustine. What makes the English Reformers unique is that they were the most successful of all the Reformers in doing this.

In 'The Mass and the English Reformers' Dugmore traces the development of the doctrine of the Holy Eucharist in early Middle Ages all the way up the waning days of scholasticism in the 15th century. He explains that two different but complimentary trajectories develop with regard to the eucharist. One was rooted in the Augustinian (St. Augustine) tradition, and emphasized the presence of Christ in the act of Holy Communion and the people of God. The other was rooted in the Ambrosian (St. Ambrose) tradition, and emphasized the Real Presence of Jesus in the bread and wine. As the Middle Ages went on the Ambrosian tradition gained more traction than the Augustinian tradition, though the latter never completely died out.

The Ambrosian tradition created a whole new set of problems for Medieval theologians to work out. The main problem was to explain how Christ could be present in the bread and wine. All sorts of proposals and theories were propounded, some of which resurfaced centuries later during the Reformation. The one that is most famous and ended up winning the day was the doctrine of transubstantiation, which teaches that at the moment of consecration ("This is my Body. This is my Blood.") the 'substance'—i.e. the underlying reality of the bread and wine—changes into the Body and Blood of Jesus, while the 'accidents'—i.e. the physical part that we see, handle, and consume—stays bread and wine. Transubstantiation basically was an attempt to use Aristotelian metaphysics to explain the mystery of Christ's presence in the Holy Eucharist.

Theologians argued about the mode of Christ's presence in the eucharist for hundreds of years, as well as related problems such as the relation of the sacrifice of the Mass to the death of Christ on the Cross until Pope Innocent III called the Fourth Lateran Council (1215), where transubstantiation was proclaimed official Church dogma. (It is worth mentioning here that transubstantiation was never accepted as a dogma—or even an option of belief—in the Orthodox Churches of the Christian east.)

One of the teachings that became associated with the doctrine was that Christ's physical, natural body was present when the elements changed... the bread became not just Jesus' spiritual body, but his actual, heavenly flesh (and blood). This, along with other ecclesiastical developments, lead to a general decline in people making their Holy Communion. They preferred to adore from afar the Body of Jesus (when the priest would elevate the Host) rather than risk actually receiving the Body of Christ.

While the Reformers had many theological (and political) concerns, one of their most pastoral concerns was encouraging Christian people to actually make their Holy Communion. To do this they felt it necessary to challenge the Romish dogma of transubstantiation. Martin Luther came up with a very similar doctrine called 'consubstantiation' which was viewed by the other Reformers as being to 'transubstantiation-lite' and therefore unacceptable. Zwingli and his successor, Bullinger, (the fathers of the Anabaptist movement) rejected all belief in Real Presence and eucharistic sacrifice, making the Lord's Supper into a memorial meal where the Christian simply recalls what Christ did for humanity on the cross. Calvin believed in a Real Presence of Christ, but not one that was located in the elements of bread and wine, rather one that was found in the worthy reception of the believer.

The English Reformers were unique in this milieu, desiring to do away with the excesses of Romish theology—the doctrine of transubstantiation, the laity being excluded from receiving the Precious Blood, the doctrine of eucharistic sacrifice as then popularly conceived, and the crude notion that the communicant eats Christ's natural, physical body—while retaining a belief in the Real Presence of Christ in the bread and wine. While individual English Reformers sometimes varied in their emphases, the main trajectory of the Church of England and the Prayer Book was to a belief in the... *The article continues on the next page.*

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...Real Presence that was ancient, biblical, and patristic, and not tied up with the spurious dogma of Transubstantiation. Article XXVIII of the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion states that the dogma "*overtroweth the nature of a sacrament.*" This because a sacrament consists of an outward, visible sign. If the substance of the sign changes, then one no longer has the sign. The Article also says, "*The Body of Christ is given, taken, and eaten, in the Supper, only after an heavenly and spiritual manner. And the mean whereby the Body of Christ is received and eaten in the Supper, is Faith.*" This addresses the Medieval controversy that the literal, physical Body and Blood of Jesus were consumed at the Mass. The problem the Reformers had with this was the fact that Christ's literal, physical Body was, after his glorious Ascension, now in heaven.

Each Reformer dealt with the baggage of Medieval eucharistic theology in his own unique way, and the English Reformers were no different. The 'originality' of the eucharistic theology of the English Reformers was found precisely in their recovery of ancient biblical and patristic teachings and their measured acceptance of the best of the Medieval liturgical and theological

traditions. They were actually ridiculed by almost all of the continental Reformers for not taking the Reformation far enough. The Puritan party within the English Church hated the Prayer Book and the official Church eucharistic theology it taught.

All in all, Dugmore does an amazing job explaining the unique Anglican approach to the sacrament of Holy Communion. One also appreciates the incredible difficulty theologians of all eras have in trying to explain something that is ultimately a mystery, using words that can be understood in a variety of different ways (e.g. "real, natural, spiritual," etc.). Archbishop Laud spoke on the matter definitively during his archepiscopate (which was rudely interrupted by the Puritans, who had him imprisoned and beheaded) when he stated that the manner of Christ's presence in the Holy Communion cannot be explained... it just *is*. So to this day Anglicans, in contrast to our Roman (and many of our Protestant) brethren, do not attempt to explain or define the nature of Christ's presence. We simply believe that, according to Christ's command, when we partake of the sacramental bread and wine we are partaking of Christ's spiritual Body and Blood just as he said we would. ✠

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## PARISH NEWS & UPDATES:

### **Stand, Sit, Kneel**

Anglican worship is well known for its vigorous calisthenics. As we see in the service booklet and in the Book of Common Prayer we are stand, sit, or kneel (each as we are able) at certain times. The tradition rule for when we do each one is this: stand to praise God (e.g. sing hymns), sit to listen to the word of God (Epistle, lessons, sermon, etc.), and kneel to pray. Sometimes there are exceptions to these, such as when we stand for the reading of the Gospel, or kneel to sing the Communion Hymn, but generally these guidelines hold true in every type of Anglican service.

### **Special Thanks**

This month we highlight just a few of the many people in our parish family for whom we are thankful. First there is Tom Dixon who has been cleaning out the so-called "Junior Warden's Closet" downstairs opposite the basement. Thanks to him this once disgusting and foreboding place is now looking great! We also thank our friends across the street at Wilna Seventh Day Adventist Church, who let us use their dumpster to dispose of much of the basement junk Tom cleared away. The parish also thanks Gary Moses for replacing

the exterior office steps which had begun to rot. Thanks to his hard work they look great and are once again safe and sound! Thanks also goes out to Bette Scarborough who gave the church her entire library of choral music for children and adult choirs. Bette graduated from the Peabody in Baltimore and was a lifelong church organist and choir director. And finally, we thank the Rev'd Fr. Dick Baskwill for donating his late wife Betty's music library and grand piano to the church. (Special thanks also to Dr. Jim Anthony, our organist, for curating and organizing her music collection for us.) Betty was a highly accomplished and degreed church organist and musician for her whole life. Her beautiful Baldwin grand piano will go in the parish hall and will be used for church and community events. The existing Kimball piano donated by the Burt family will be put in the office for the time being, and then moved to the expanded nave to be used in worship services. (The grand piano would be too big to be used in even an expanded nave.) Fr. Baskwill is generously covering the moving costs for the piano, and like our current instrument, the grand piano will be professionally tuned every year and kept in perfect condition. Thanks be to God for his generous people! ✠