

St Stephen's News

ST STEPHEN'S ANGLICAN CHURCH · TIMONIUM, MARYLAND

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A parish in the classical Anglican tradition

19th July 2016

FROM THE RECTOR

Authority in the Church? It's no longer the Bible

"How on earth did we get into this mess?" is a question frequently on the lips of people horrified with the seemingly never-ending shenanigans that afflict all of America's mainline churches. Confusingly, perhaps, there is an abundance of answers on offer.

Some blame the problem on church leaders who refer to Jesus as "our mother." Others claim it is rooted in the ordination of unrepentant sexual sinners. Still others attribute it to the admission of women to Holy Orders. For yet others, the root of the troubles is the wholesale abandonment traditional liturgies.

But all these are simply symptoms of the insidious disorder that has afflicted the human race from the very beginning – our penchant for usurping God's authority; our eternal compulsion to decide for ourselves what is right and what is wrong.

And we got into got into this mess when the churches overthrew the authority of Holy Scripture.

Most folks over the age of 50 were taught at Sunday School that the Catholic Faith in its Anglican understanding rests on that most stable of constructions, a three legged stool – the legs being Scripture, Reason and Holy Tradition (a technical term that essentially means church history).

Scripture and Reason, together, can overthrow Holy Tradition. Scripture and Holy Tradition, together, can overthrow Reason. But the authority of Scripture cannot be challenged even when Holy Tradition and Reason agree against it.

That at least was the theory. But, in fact, human reason has been battering away at Holy Scripture for at least a couple of centuries, aided and abetted by what is purported to be "Holy Tradition" (church history heavily revised and reinterpreted in the light of modern fads and fancies).

As a consequence, the leaders of America's churches call to mind the men of Israel in the days of the Judges: Most are largely "doing what is right in their own eyes."

In the Anglican world, prayer book traditionalists often claim that the rot started with the adoption of the 1979 edition of the BCP and 1982's politically correct edition of the Hymnal. But, in fact, the 1928 BCP and 1940 Hymnal are far from perfect.

Some King James Bible loyalists blame "higher criticism" – the analysis of the scripture on scientific principles.

This discipline began its advance towards scholarly respectability in early 18th century Switzerland and achieved grudging academic acceptance in 19th century Germany.

Today, its principles and methods, in the guise of "Deconstructionism," have migrated to other disciplines, achieving respectability in such spheres as history and literature as well as theology.

Applied with caution and a reasonable grasp of its limitations, higher criticism has done much to unravel biblical mysteries.

However, in an academia driven by the credo of "publish or perish," and addicted to innovation and novelty, higher critics in all fields of scholarship have been tempted to over reach themselves: None more so than in the field of Scriptural Theology.

On occasion innovation has descended to what might best be described as buffoonery – the antics of the so-called Jesus Seminar being a good example.

The Seminar's gimmick was to decide the authenticity of scriptural passages by majority vote. Its members cast their votes with colored balls and have, thus, literally black balled vast swathes of the Gospels, including, unsurprisingly, the miracles.

Higher criticism, often in its most radical forms, has for best part of a half century dominated scriptural

Parish Prayer List

Our Prayer Chain offers prayer daily for people on the Prayer List as well as the guests of the Joseph Richey Hospice. To add a name to the prayer list, or to the visiting list, or to join the Prayer Chain, ring the parish office on 410 560 6776.

FOR RECOVERY: Hilarie, Phyllis, Edie, Bill, Terry, Helen, Jim, Adele, Linda, John, Judy, Neal, Aida, Nathan, Hobie, Betty, Helen, Eunice, Tom, Rosemary, Robert, David, Jan, Susie, Beth, Sophia, Bobby, Lee, Pam, Warren, Cary, Courtney, Jason Richard, John, Marie, and Alan.

FOR LIGHT, STRENGTH & GUIDANCE: Stephen, Melba, Scott, Vinnie, Doug, Ian, Lisa, Carey, Ned, Cindy, & Bruce.

IN MEMORIAM: Tom Marr, Broadcaster

THOSE WHO MOURN: The Marr Family

ON ACTIVE SERVICE: Lt Alex Bursi, Capt. Charles Bursi, Lt Nicholas Clouse, Lt Col. Harry Hughes; & Lt Cdr Emma Hawkins, RN

studies in virtually all mainstream universities, seminaries and theological colleges.

And as instructors rarely encourage students to think critically about the critics, higher criticism in its most radical forms has tended to shape the theological thinking of the leadership and clergy of most of the mainstream churches.

Like the poor, radical higher critics have always been with us: In the days of the early Church fathers, there was the heretic bishop Marcion, who in AD 125 rejected the entire Bible except St. Luke's Gospel, the Acts of the Apostles and a few Pauline epistles, all of which he heavily edited.

As for the more recent past, in the early 20th Century the Jehovah's Witnesses followed Marcion's lead and revised the scriptural record to reflect their own peculiar beliefs.

But such folks were never leaders of mainstream churches. The differences sundering the mainline churches today are not merely between orthodox Christians who uphold the full authority of the scriptures, on the one hand, and, on the other, Church moderates and radicals who reject parts of it.

Trust in the integrity of Bible has been so undermined and eroded, there is no single text of Holy Scripture that all moderates uphold as authoritative, still less a single text that's upheld by the radicals.

Thus, when church leaders ponder ways to unite their fragmented jurisdictions and denominations, one thing is virtually certain: It's unlikely they will turn to a bible folks in the pews might recognize – still less agree upon.

Sadly, the disintegration of the mainline churches seems destined to continue until the unlikely event of a

common authoritative text achieves general acceptance. But don't hold your breath while waiting for that to happen. GPH✘

The Ladies lunch on July 20th

This month the Ladies Who Lunch will meet at the Macaroni Grill, Padonia Road, Timonium, on Wednesday, 20th July at noon. Why not join us for a convivial get-together over a delicious meal? Good food and good fellowship – what more could you want? Please ring Sara Douglas on **410 560 9026** if you are able to attend; she will need a final count by Monday the 13th in order to place the reservation.

Parish Life meets August 9th

St Stephen's Parish Life meetings are taking a summer holiday for July. Our next meeting will be held on Tuesday, August 9th in the church library from 7:00 - 8:00 PM. Please join us. Priscilla & Dick Huffman

St Stephen's Anglican Church

11856 Mays Chapel Road, Timonium, MD 21093

Office: 410 560 6776 · **Rectory:** 410 665 1278

Pastoral Care: 410 252 8674

www.ststeve.com

The Ven. Canon Guy P Hawtin, *Rector*

The Ven. Michael Kerouac, *Vicar* ·

The Rev. Michael Belt, The Rev. John Novicki,

The Rev. Robert Ludwig, *Associate Rectors*

The Rev. M Wiley Hawks, *Pastoral Care Chaplain*

Mrs Happy Riley, *Director of Pastoral Care & Wedding Coordinator*

SUNDAY SERVICES

8am: Said Eucharist

9.15am: Choral Eucharist (with Nursery & Church School)

11am: Choral Mattins (1st Sunday: Sung Eucharist)

6pm: Choral Evensong (as announced) –
evensong.ststeve.com

WEEKDAY SERVICES

Wednesday, 6pm: Evening Prayer

Friday, 12 noon: Healing Eucharist

Saturday, 5pm: Family Eucharist

Calendar of Events

WEEKLY

Monday, 6.30pm: Bridge Club

Tuesday, 7am: Fellowship Breakfast (Nautilus Diner)

Thursday, 10am: Knitting Circle

Friday, 10.30am: Bible Study

MONTHLY & SPECIAL

Sunday, 17th July, 6.00 PM

Choral Evensong

Wednesday, 20th July, 6.30 PM

The Weekly Silly Summer Supper

Wednesday, 20th July, 12.00 Noon

The Ladies who Lunch

at the Macaroni Grill, Padonia Road, Timonium

To reserve, call the Parish Office.: 410-560-6776

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

St Stephen's Anglican Church
11856 Mays Chapel Road
Timonium, MD 21093

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