



SANCTUARY

St. Alban's Episcopal Church

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Elberton, Georgia

INTERIM RECTOR'S REFLECTION



I've been engaged for some time in an e-mail debate with a person who describes himself as a "Theocratist." Theocracy holds that all human government should be rejected in favor of the sovereign rule of God.

The early Israelites experimented with theocracy, but inevitably turned to mortals – primarily the judges, but sometimes priests and prophets – to express and interpret the divine will in terms that could be understood by God's "subjects."

Ultimately, they turned to human kings. (The Prophet Samuel, among others, said they would regret it. They were rejecting God's kingship, he said, and God would not be happy with their voting Him out of office. In the ups and downs of Hebrew history, there seem to have been a lot more downs than ups. I suppose that might be taken as evidence that Samuel et. al. were right.)

My debate opponent takes his distrust of human governance to the point of refusing to vote. Voting, he argues, is participating in secular evil. I told him that, while I honor his right to refrain, my own position is that voting is more than a civil responsibility. For me, there is a religious conviction to vote for the party and candidates I believe best express concern for those whom our Lord called the least of his sisters and brothers. I suggested that if he didn't want to vote, he might do well to find a church where the Eucharist was being offered on Election Day and offer special intention for the rule of God on earth.

He objected to that suggestion, too. What he did or didn't do in or out of church, on Election Day or any other time, he said, was between him and his "Maker and True King." That of course raises the issue of balance between individualism and corporateness in our relationship(s) with God. My friend's

TAKING NOTE

Sr. Warden Steve Jenkins announced that the Bishop will visit St. Albans to meet with Vestry and Nominating Committee Tuesday, September 10. He invited the congregation to come at 5:30 p.m. Please let Barbara Nicas know if you plan to attend.

Friday noon **Bible Study** with Fr. Gene Britton resumes for the Fall. On Friday, September 6 at 12:15 p.m., the group plans a picnic to celebrate and will take a short hike to **Old Dan Tucker's grave**. Fr. Gene will give an idea of coming attractions.

Cherub Sunday School will start on a regular basis September 8th. Marjorie Jenkins will team-teach with Miss Marcia.

READY NOW: ST. ALBAN'S PARISH PROFILE



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position, it seems to me, tends to be radically individualistic, while my own stance emphasizes the importance of believers coming together to share the blessings of God's presence.

I am certainly aware of the value of privacy in prayer. Jesus said something about going into your secret place when you pray. One of the most awesome responsibilities laid upon priests is to respect the "seal of the Confessional." It's private, individual, and confidential. I think all of us benefit from being able to approach God as individuals, each with our unique concerns.

Even so, even when we pray privately, we are borne up and supported and surrounded with "so great a cloud of witnesses, that we might rejoice in their fellowship" in the Communion of Saints. (Proper Preface for All Saints, BCP, p. 380)

Our Lord has promised that He is with us when as many as two or three of us come together in His Name. At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit that previously had indwelt individuals was "poured on" on a whole group of believers. We are the Body of Christ! I've always been moved by the concept that "we come together in our brokenness" to find healing and unity.

I'm sorry if I'm stepping on someone's sentimentality here, but I think that old song of Protestant Piety, "In the Garden", can be a hymn to exclusivity and esotericism. Think carefully about what it says: "I come to the garden alone, while the dew is still on the roses. And He walks with me, and He talks with me, and He tells me I am His own. And the joys we share as we tarry there, none other has ever known." (I've probably garbled the words, but you can see I was brought up on this stuff, before I actually started listening to what was being sung.)

"The joys none other has ever known"? Just you and me, Lord! Right?

I've got the Lord of all captured in an exclusive one-to-one relationship, and none of these other sisters and brothers had better horn in! Christian Communion is corporate worship. In the Lord's Prayer, we claim Him as "Our Father," not just "my Father." Our baptism brings us into a family, a corporateness.

And, if my e-mail debater friend is correct in insisting that God is the "True King," who's God going to reign over? Just my friend in a

Coming Soon:
DIOCESAN COUNCIL:
NOVEMBER 15-16
in Augusta GA this year.

John and Robin Keeler were elected diocesan council delegates on Sunday August 25. Arlene Whitlow and Marcia Jenkins agreed to be alternates.



*Jennifer Plourde and daughter
Aubrey Leigh Plourde.*

*Jennifer and Jim Plourde brought their new
daughter Aubrey to St. Albans on Sunday Au-
gust 18th. Fr. Gene Britton and Fr. Herschell
Atkinson celebrated Aubrey's baptism together
with the congregation and friends.
Welcome, Aubrey!*

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one-to-one relationship that's nobody else's business? Sort of puts a numerical limit to the Kingdom, doesn't it – as just the two of them wander off through the Garden having experiences not possible for anybody else.

There has to be a balance of course. That's the answer to paradoxes in faith and practice. I do pray privately, of course. But I thank God that I also have the opportunity to come together with you, the people of God, corporately open to His grace and power. Certainly, I recognize the absolute supremacy of God – but I don't think He minds if I keep on voting in secular elections. I think voting booths are part of His kingdom, too, so I'll keep on asking for His guidance as I close the curtain.

Fr. Gene Britton+

**Parish Profile
Quotes**

"We need a priest who will have regular office hours to be an invitation to the community to share our good fortune."

"Love the Episcopal Service -- It fulfills my spiritual needs."

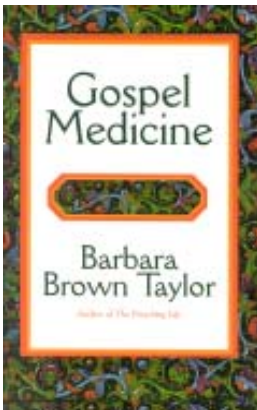
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"Luke never resigned his job as a healer. He just changed medicines."



Gospel Medicine...

by Barbara Brown Taylor

*St. Alban's Adult Sunday School
will be reading selections from this
1995 book of short essays on
"tellers of the story which does not
heal by taking away the pain but by
giving us a way to live with it."*

Come read with us!

*Sunday mornings
"10 'til 10" to 10:45 a.m.
starting September 8th.*

***Available at Cathedral Bookstore
and Amazon.com for about \$10.***