**Hermeneutics:**

The Archbishop of Canterbury has been calling for the development of a consensus understanding of what constitutes an Anglican hermeneutic. If I recall correctly, I think the last Lambeth Conference did as well. I'm not at all convinced that there \*is\* an Anglican hermeneutic - at least not at this particular moment in history, but I think the fact that we're calling for one is a tacit admission that we feel the lack of reasonably broad consensus about how to approach biblical texts in the 21st century.

I stumbled across a note on an online forum a few months ago that was essentially a request for more information about the Alexandrian model of hermeneutics vs. an Antiochian one. The idea was that the Antiochian method was more literal, the Alexandrian more allegorical. I've been thinking about that since I read it. I don't think there's a neat division into two schools - that's a little simplistic to say the least - but the idea that maybe its time to rethink our feelings about allegorical understandings of scripture has stuck with me.

Diana Butler Bass came out to visit us in Phoenix this past Spring and she commended our Cathedral on the good work we were doing re-traditioning our message and preaching of the Gospel. I think she's absolutely right that we need to focus on doing this - it's a piece with finding a new approach to the Atonement isn't it?

I've noticed that in preaching to a relatively young, bright congregation here in Phoenix, the most excitement seems to come when I can help them discover a traditional mystical and/or allegorical understanding of text. That seems to resonate more with the hearers than (to borrow a phrase from Spurgeon I think) focusing on the historicity of the Jebusites.

When I was in seminary the idea of preaching an allegorical interpretation of a scriptural passage was viewed with extreme distaste. Like "fail the preaching course" distaste. But the typical preaching we were encouraged to do just doesn't seem to be connecting anymore. Maybe it's time to look back to the Middle Ages and late Roman period and find new ways to connect with a post-modern, post-positivist audience. Clearly we need to avoid the trap of the "Seven characteristics of a Camel" sort of allegory, but my own sense is that it's time for us to think this through again.

So that's what I'm going to do - I want to spend some time reading up on the historical development of hermeneutics. I've got one book identified and I'll be looking around for some others. Suggestions would be welcome!

The Very Rev. Nicholas Knisely, Dean

Trinity Cathedral, Phoenix, AZ