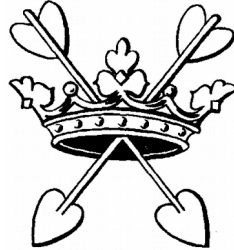


The Parish of St. Edmund, King and Martyr

(Waterloo, Ontario)



The Anglican Catholic Church of Canada
(A member of the worldwide Traditional Anglican Communion)

UPDATE

April 4, 2005 - **St. Isidore of Seville**

May Schedule

May 1	Sunday	-	St. Philip and St. James the Apostles / Rogation Sunday
May 5	Thursday	-	Ascension Day
May 8	Sunday	-	The Sunday after Ascension Day
May 15	Sunday	-	Pentecost / Whitsunday
May 22	Sunday	-	Trinity Sunday / The Octave Day of Pentecost
May 26	Thursday	-	Corpus Christi
May 29	Sunday	-	The First Sunday after Trinity
May 31	Tuesday	-	The Visitation of the

Blessed Virgin Mary to St. Elizabeth

Service Times and Location

(1) All Services are held in the Chapel at Luther Village on the Park - 139 Father David Bauer Drive in Waterloo.

(2) On Sundays, **Matins** is sung at **10:00 a.m.** (The **Litany** on the first Sunday of the month), and the **Holy Eucharist** is celebrated (sung) at **10:30 a.m.**

(3) On weekdays - **Holy Days** and **Days of Obligation** - the **Holy Eucharist** is *usually* celebrated at **7:00 p.m.** when the Chapel is available.

Notes and Comments

- 1) **The Bishop is coming** - our new Bishop Ordinary, The Right Reverend Peter D. Wilkinson, OSG, will be visiting us **on Thursday, May 19**, for Evensong, Mass, and then dinner in *our* restaurant. Please mark your calendars and plan to attend.
- 2) Continued commentary on the Windsor Report - **Overreach** - see page 4, for the third of three parts.
- 3) Welcome back! The first monthly piece from England from our former leader - **The Right Reverend Robert W. S. Mercer, CR** - see page 5 - **Robert's Ramblings** - **A holiday in Holland**
- 4) **Why Christianity must offend liberal "broad-mindedness"** - see page 7, for the second of two parts
- 5) An answer - **Question (and Answer ?)** - thanks to Father Richard Harris - see page 8.
- 6) Two doctrines of GOD! - **Who or what is the GOD of the modern, western Anglican Churches?** - see page 9.

St. Isidore of Seville

Isidore was literally born into a family of saints in sixth century Spain. Two of his brothers, Leander and Fulgentius, and one of his sisters, Florentina, are revered as saints in Spain. It was also a family of leaders and strong minds with Leander and Fulgentius serving as bishops and Florentina as abbess.

This didn't make life easier for Isidore. To the contrary, Leander may have been holy

in many ways, but his treatment of his little brother shocked many even at the time. Leander, who was much older than Isidore, took over Isidore's education and his pedagogical theory involved force and punishment. We know from Isidore's later accomplishments that he was intelligent and hard-working so it is hard to understand why Leander thought abuse would work instead of patience.

One day, the young boy couldn't take any more. Frustrated by his inability to learn as fast as his brother wanted and hurt by his brother's treatment, Isidore ran away. But though he could escape his brother's hand and words, he couldn't escape his own feeling of failure and rejection. When he finally let the outside world catch his attention, he noticed water dripping on the rock near where he sat. The drops of water that fell repeatedly carried no force and seemed to have no effect on the solid stone. And yet he saw that over time, the water drops had worn holes in the rock.

Isidore realized that if he kept working at his studies, his seemingly small efforts would eventually pay off in great learning. He also may have hoped that his efforts would also wear down the rock of his brother's heart.

When he returned home, however, his brother in exasperation confined him to a cell (probably in a monastery) to complete his studies, not believing that he wouldn't run away again.

Either there must have been a loving side to this relationship or Isidore was remarkably forgiving even for a saint, because later he would work side by side with his brother and after Leander's death, Isidore would complete many of the projects he began including a missal and breviary.

In a time where it's fashionable to blame

the past for our present and future problems, Isidore was able to separate the abusive way he was taught from the joy of learning. He didn't run from learning after he left his brother but embraced education and made it his life's work. Isidore rose above his past to become known as the greatest teacher in Spain.

His love of learning made him promote the establishment of a seminary in every diocese of Spain. He didn't limit his own studies and didn't want others to as well. In a unique move, he made sure that all branches of knowledge including the arts and medicine were taught in the seminaries.

His encyclopedia of knowledge, the *Etymologies*, was a popular textbook for nine centuries. He also wrote books on grammar, astronomy, geography, history, and biography as well as theology. When the Arabs brought study of Aristotle back to Europe, this was nothing new to Spain because Isidore's open mind had already reintroduced the philosopher to students there.

As bishop of Seville for 37 years, succeeding Leander, he set a model for representative government in Europe. Under his direction, and perhaps remembering the tyrannies of his brother, he rejected autocratic decision-making and organized synods to discuss government of the Spanish Church.

Still trying to wear away rock with water, he helped convert the barbarian Visigoths from Arianism to Christianity.

He lived until almost 80. As he was dying his house was filled with crowds of poor he was giving aid and alms to. One of his last acts was to give all his possessions to the poor.

When he died in 636, this Doctor of the

Church had done more than his brother had ever hoped; the light of his learning caught fire in Spanish minds and held back the Dark Ages of barbarism from Spain. But even greater than his outstanding mind must have been the genius of his heart that allowed him to see beyond rejection and discouragement to joy and possibility.

From www.catholic.org

From here and there

a) In the funeral rites the Church celebrates the paschal mystery of Christ. Those who in baptism have become one with the dead and risen Christ will pass with him from death to life, to be purified in soul and welcomed into the fellowship of the saints in heaven. They look forward in blessed hope to his second coming and the bodily resurrection of the dead. From *Introduction to the Funeral Rites of the Catholic Church*

b) **Only in America** do we buy hot dogs in packages of ten and buns in packages of eight.

c) Subject to the availability of priests, THE HOLY EUCHARIST IS THE NORMAL AND PRINCIPAL ACT OF WORSHIP ON SUNDAYS AND PRINCIPAL FEAST DAYS. It is desirable that, as in a number of our parishes, Mattins (in whole or in part), and/or the Litany, be used before it. Where the Eucharist has to be in the evening, a similar combination with Evensong is in order. [Therefore, if there is a priest available, the Holy Eucharist must be celebrated. If possible, it should be preceded by Mattins or Evensong.] From a memo by **Bishop de Catanzaro** in 1981 - the comments in square brackets are by **Bishop Wilkinson**.

d) A man suffered a serious heart attack and had open heart surgery. He awakened from the surgery to find himself in the care of nuns at a Catholic Hospital. As he was recovering, a nun asked him questions regarding how he was going to pay for his treatment.

She asked if he had health insurance. He replied, in a raspy voice, "No health insurance." The nun asked if he had money in the bank. He replied, "No money in the bank." The nun then asked, "Do you have a relative who could help you?" He said, "I only have a spinster sister, who is a nun."

The nun became agitated and announced loudly, "Nuns are not spinsters! Nuns are married to God." The patient replied, "Send the bill to my brother-in-law."

e) "Our Father, Who does art in heaven, Harold is His name. Amen." **A 3-year-old**

f) A man for whom tolerance is a virtue is a man with no conscience. **G.K. Chesterton**

g) A balanced diet is a biscuit in each hand.

h) We have forgotten that human law is a tissue when it is not founded in the moral law written into nature by nature's God. **David Warren**

i) A person who never travels always praises his own mother's cooking. **Baganda proverb**

Overreach - 3 of 3

(The Windsor Report, discussed below, was commissioned by the Archbishop of Canterbury to address the current crisis within the Anglican

Communion brought to a head by the consecration within the Episcopal Church of the United States of a divorced man who openly lives in a same-sex union, and the decision of the Bishop and Synod of the Diocese of New Westminster in The Anglican Church of Canada to permit and provide for the blessing of same-sex unions in church.)

But the disease of overreach does not stop there but extends explicitly to creedal doctrine both in Canada and elsewhere in the Anglican Communion precisely because there is no mechanism to hold the churches accountable to essential doctrine. The Anglican Church in New Zealand in its 1989 *A New Zealand Prayer Book* provided in place of the three classical Creeds, liturgical affirmations of the Faith which obscure the identity of the Father and the Son; in short, they are not Trinitarian. In Canada, and only in Canada, we might add, the *filioque* clause was dropped from the version of the Nicene Creed provided for use in the 1985 *Book of Alternative Services*. As well, provision was made to allow the *Shema - the "Hear, O Israel"* - to be used as a creedal alternative to the Nicene and Apostles' Creeds. Such provisions undermine the Trinitarian orthodoxy of the Anglican Church and its undeniably western character.

The clear point that has to be made is that these churches, through their Synodical instruments, had no authority to make such substantial changes in matters of fundamental doctrine to the liturgies. In the matter of the *filioque* clause one has to accept that it is the form in which the Western Churches have understood, prayed and proclaimed the Doctrine of the Trinity, which in no way invalidates the Eastern Orthodox tradition that omits the *filioque*, subscribing to a different but legitimate way of thinking and praying the Trinity, a point which Anglican divines such as John Pearson in his classic *On the*

Creed, was at pains to establish.

The Churches that emerged in the early modern period, like the emerging national states in which they found themselves, had to give much thought and expression to distinctions which are currently lost in our contemporary confusions. Both the Churches of the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation had to work out what it means to be the Church in the form of the various churches. The main distinctions had to do with recognizing the respective spheres of doctrine and polity and their interrelation. With respect to doctrine, the upshot of the English Reformation was a clear determination to hold fast to what one might call a minimalist view of essential doctrine, especially the Trinitarian orthodoxy embodied in the creeds, and to enshrine this in the liturgy.

The betrayal of Trinitarian orthodoxy was further advanced in the Anglican Church of Canada which in 1995 allowed for use three Eucharistic prayers, two of which explicitly and self-consciously denied the identity of the Son of God. As with every other issue in the Canadian Church what is most apparent is the inviolability of the process. It is what remains sacred. Doctrine is about nothing more than those who shout the loudest capturing the attention of those who presume to be the makers of doctrine.

Much of this must be laid squarely at the feet of the bishops who have either been the slaves of their synods or have used them as their poodles. In every case, there has been an overreach of authority. The latest controversy about "*same-sex*" belongs to the same reality. For if God can be re-imaged, what on earth can prevent the re-defining of marriage and, for that matter, ourselves. Is not everything a social construct, after all?

Against the clear and undeniable principle of Christian marriage unambiguously presented in *The Book of Common Prayer*, the teaching which in principle Bishops and clergy are obliged to uphold, Bishops and Synods presume that the doctrine of marriage itself is subject to alteration and change. And as with every other matter, so here, the discourse is clouded by the failure or inability to make distinctions theologically, politically and pastorally. In the present case, for example, the re-marriage of divorced persons and the blessings of animals are invoked as justification for the church's redefining of the received institution of Christian marriage. The one is a negative argument - making the sad situation of failure the basis for the normative; the other is indeterminate and strangely insulting - making no distinction between the objects and kinds of blessing and equating the blessing of same-sex couples with the blessing of animals!

Sadly, what is also lost is the recognition of the role and place of Christian friendship. Relationships are invariably reduced to some form of sexual activity. The prevailing view of the indeterminate Trinity - any three will do - debases the Doctrine of the Trinity in the concreteness of its expression of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. This has its parallel in the debasing of both friendship and marriage. Any form of '*committed relationship*' will do.

The overreach does not constrain itself to matters of doctrine, orders and morals now in such confused disarray. It also extends to property. Episcopal authority increasingly seeks to have complete control over the parishes and priests in ways that violate the legitimate and various forms of relationship between parishes, priests and bishops. Synods, too, are drawn into this either in collusion with Episcopal agendas

or as arrogating unto themselves powers which were formally resident in the bishops. At stake is the viability of the Anglican witness in the land. Episcopal and Synodical overreach serves the interest of the bureaucratic or committee church, busily passing motions of how the world should run while living off the avails of the parishes to their destruction.

The Windsor Report belongs to the same mind-set that has bankrupted the Communion. Without the integrity of principle, all matters of process are inherently flawed. It matters for ecclesiology whether one's Trinitarian theology is Arian or Athanasian. One might make the argument more pointedly and say that it matters for the ecclesiology of the churches of the Anglican Communion - if there is to be one - whether one's Trinitarian theology is western or not. How? Because orthodox Trinitarian theology, significantly in its western form, upholds the basis for a polity that is constitutional and limited, that recognizes and respects the legitimate diversity of theological points of view through the deep commitment to essential doctrine which it refuses to compromise in the name of expediency and advocacy. It alone allows for the principled engagement with the various forms of secularism - both the good and the bad - which arise from Western Christianity.

The Windsor Report reveals just how completely the Bishops and the Synods have betrayed what has been entrusted to them. Paradoxically, given the Anglican enlightenment experience when there were attempts to re-write the foundational doctrines such as the Articles and the Liturgy *that failed*, the current Anglican position doctrinally is caught between an existential animism, on the one hand, and a dry and brain-dead deism, on the other hand; in short, what has been

compromised is Trinitarian orthodoxy. Such is the consequence of the overreach of Bishops and Synods, the unbridled authority of process over principle.

By **The Rev. David Curry**, Rector of Christ Church, Windsor, Nova Scotia - December 29, 2004

Robert's Ramblings

A holiday in Holland

What France is to Canada, Holland is to Southern Africa. It would be surprising if the French spoken in New Brunswick and in Quebec did not differ from that spoken in Paris. After all, France has many regional accents and dialects, Breton, Gascon, Norman, Provencal. But the regional Dutch of Southern Africa evolved into a new and separate language, with grammar, pronunciation, spelling and vocabulary differing from the mother tongue's, though the two languages still understand each other. Afrikaans adopted words from English, French, Malay and the various vernacular languages of African peoples, like *donga* for *ditch*.

South Africa was more successfully bilingual than is Canada. Television was exclusively in one language for part of the evening, exclusively in the other language for the next part. We Anglophones pepper our English with Afrikaans words like *braai* for *barbecue* and *bakkie* for *pick-up truck*. We Anglophones relish Afrikaans recipes. We sing Afrikaans folk songs like *Sarie Marais*. Even the national anthem *Die Stem*, the Voice, we sang only in Afrikaans. We all observed the same Roman-Dutch civil law, even neighbouring countries like Botswana, Lesotho and Southern Rhodesia. We all knew at least some Dutch history, especially the Reformation and its

concomitant independence from Spain.

Whereas most Anglophones were likely to do post graduate studies in England, Afrikaners were more likely to do them in Holland. But even so, it is as natural for all Southern Africans to visit Holland as it is for all Canadians to visit France.

So in January, after I had dumped luggage on my sister in Worthing, West Sussex, I nipped across the Channel for a week's holiday. One highlight was a concert in the Royal *Concertgebouw* of Amsterdam, at which the main item was *Harold in Italy* by Hector Berlioz.

Over the years I have come to know several RC churches in the sixteenth century centre of Amsterdam. But my favourite remains the *Papegaaikerkerk* or Parrot-church in the narrow and medieval Calf Street. After the Reformation the RC church was illegal. Calvinism was official. Papists had to meet in secret. Houses did not yet have street numbers. Instead, they displayed symbols up on their gables, a rising sun, a calf, a sailing ship, along with the dates of their construction. The house where RC's met was marked with a parrot. Later when Roman Catholicism was permitted, alterations were made to this house so that it became a church behind its domestic facade, tall and narrow, like all the other gabled houses in the city, still marked by its parrot.

The Parrot-church has daily services of course and is open for prayer. On Sundays there are two sung masses, one mid morning and one at noon. Each service, sung by the same small professional choir, has a different setting, so that the 10.30 may be Mozart and the 12.30 may be plainsong. Sunday services are in Latin though the readings and the sermon are in Dutch. Unfortunately for me, the preacher has the high pitched, nasal, rapid fire

accent characteristic of Amsterdam, so that I soon lose the gist of his allocution. Ceremonial is mod, but even so the atmosphere is reverent. Many of the congregants are from South East Asia, from the former empire of the Netherlands, and these folk take little notice of Vatican II and its liturgical dictats. Of course I observe the Roman rule about protestant heretics not communicating at altars of the one true church, though once in a suburban and trendy church they tried to persuade me to communicate. I didn't: the *sanctus* was omitted from the mass, the congregants sat for all prayer, including the consecration, and communicated sitting, passing the sacrament up and down the pews. The music was dirge like. I thought I had strayed into a Dutch Reformed service.

One pleasure of Amsterdam is the dates on the gables of houses. 1611, the year of the King James Bible. 1652, the year the Dutch East Indies Company founded its victualling station in Cape Town, so beginning modern South African history. 1662, the year of the Prayer Book of King Charles II. Of course I try to picture our King in exile in that city, safe from Oliver Cromwell, cold and hungry, dancing and dancing with his courtiers in an effort to keep warm during an exceptionally savage winter.

Amsterdam, though medieval in origin, belongs to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, to the Golden Age of Holland, when she dominated the high seas and the world's trade. Art and science flourished, to say nothing of domestic architecture and furniture. But the city of Utrecht belongs to the middle ages. Another highlight of my holiday was a day in this other city, with a friend doing a PhD about poverty in Sri Lanka. One of my friend's academic supervisors is at Utrecht university, the other supervisor is in Sri Lanka itself. We even took in a ceremony at which a PhD

was being conferred on a German for his research into cancer. The grave academics were in black gowns and those small stove-pipe hats one sees on rabbis, on Greek priests and on French lawyers. The graduate, accompanied by his wife and young daughter, the last looking like Alice in Wonderland, sat nervously on special chairs right before the semi circle of academics.

One can see where the city walls of Utrecht used to stand. One can visit the many medieval churches, which the Dutch Reformed Church doesn't know what to do with. One can visit the local RC church with its oval holy table of glass. One can admire the enormous cathedral with its cloister and garden. One can approve the imaginative use the state church makes of this building in its ministry to university students. True, one end of the cathedral is dominated by a vast pulpit and a vast organ, but at the other end there is a proper choir and a large stone altar at which one of the ministers offers the Lord's Supper every Sunday and festival, dressed in an alb and coloured stole. Many side chapels are in use for private prayer, icons and votive candles are in evidence. If Protestant worthies are commemorated with proper gratitude, such as Dietrich Bonhoeffer, so too are RC saints, such as St Teresa Avila. One got the feeling that when the time came for God to call the present Pope home to Himself, these members of the DR Church would give sincere thanks for his ministry to the whole of Christendom. Utrecht spoke to me of healing in God's good time between RC's and Calvinists.

The week was soon over, and it was time for Mirfield, followed by settling in at Worthing. Life became full of learning experiences: where to find a dentist, how to join the National Health, if to pay taxes, how to get on the voter's roll, how to make

a new will, how to pay the gas people and the electricity people, how to acquire a TV, where to shop for this and that, how to get to our nearest Continuing Anglican parish, St Agatha's in Portsmouth. In due course I shall tell you more about these wonderful folk a good few miles from here. But for now I say, "Thanks be to God", for a holiday in Holland.

+Robert Mercer CR

By The retired, third Bishop of The Anglican Catholic Church of Canada

Why Christianity must offend liberal "broad-mindedness" 2 of 2

Sentimental notion

It is the person of Christ upon which Christianity rests, and the all-too-common sentimental notion that He was merely a charismatic teacher of nice ideas about love and human brotherhood simply doesn't stand up to critical scrutiny. On the basis of Jesus' own sayings recorded in the Bible (and outside of the Bible we know nothing substantive about Him; a "Christianity" that rejects Biblical authority is asinine) we are faced with a clear-cut set of alternatives: Jesus was either a madman with paranoiac delusions, or He was indeed Who He said He was. Either He rose from the dead on the third day, or He didn't.

No founder of any other significant religion ever claimed that he was in his own person the One True living God. Mohammed didn't; Siddhartha Gautama (Buddha) didn't; Ali Muhammad (the Bab) didn't; Mirza Husayn Ali Nuri (Baha'u'llah) didn't; Lao-tzu didn't; only Christ claimed to save the world because He Himself was God, and that He had personally defeated sin

and death. The quintessential Christian challenge is: "What think ye of Christ?" - "Who do you say that I am?"

Fraud and pointless delusion

Whether Jesus Christ rose from the dead or not is more than a theological or rhetorical question. If Jesus didn't rise on Easter morning, then Christianity is a fraud and a pointless delusion. As St. Paul put it: "If there is no resurrection from the dead, then Christ is not risen, and if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is empty . . . If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most pitiable." (1 Cor. 15: 13-14, 19)

On the other hand, if Jesus really did rise from the dead, the implications for those who reject Him are profound and dire. Christianity is either the most important thing in life, or it is a lie. It can't be both. Anyone who does not affirm what Jesus Christ said of Himself, and what orthodox Christians have taught and believed for two millennia, cannot legitimately call him or her self "Christian." Anyone who does believe the Gospel of Christ must consider it the absolute and final truth - something so overwhelming that it ought to dominate their entire life.

Therefore, no room exists in true Christian belief for the notion that other religions can be "just as true as Christianity." If Jesus was not God and there was no literal Resurrection, then all of Christianity is a lie and not worth bothering with. If He was God and did rise, then all other religions must be mistaken in their theological conclusions.

The final accounting

The idea that Christians can affirm the teachings and beliefs of other religions as being "equally true and valid" is logically

absurd, and certainly is not supported by the Christian Gospels. According moral equivalence to mutually contradictory religious views is the product of doubt - not faith. I hasten to emphasize that the necessary Christian belief that everyone needs to accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, and that those who reject Him are in grave spiritual peril, neither implies nor condones coercion. It is impossible for someone to become truly Christian against their will in any case. Christians must respect and scrupulously tolerate the right of adherents to other religions or no religion to be wrong, and to practise their false beliefs in peace, but we must never flinch from affirming that at the final accounting, "every knee shall bow . . . and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord" (Phil:2:10)

It must also be emphasized that while the Christian religion is absolutely and uncompromisingly true, it is, and always has been, practised by poor sinners who at their best can only reflect Christ's Truth to the world with varying degrees of distortion. Christ is infallible; Christians are all too prone to failure. If you're looking in at Christianity from outside - look for Jesus, and remember that the human shortcomings of Christians are ours - not His.

By **Charles W. Moore**

Question (and Answer ?)

Here's the contents of the email (March 16) from Father Harris addressing the reason for the different ways of introducing the Lessons at the Offices, and the Epistle/Lesson and Gospel at Mass:

"Dear Gary,

I have indeed been pondering the question you asked last month about the order of the announcement of the readings in Morning Prayer vs the Eucharist. I'm neither an "Liturgist" nor a scholar but a simple parish priest, so what I say carries no authority or weight. My findings and suppositions nevertheless are as follows:

A quick check of the 1918 Canadian BCP (and hence I would assume the 1662 BCP - I can't find my copy) along with the 1928 PECUSA BCP have the Office Lessons introduced in exactly the same way as those for the Eucharist (Chapter, Book, Verse). It is the 1962 BCP which has departed from the traditional order of introduction. So the question becomes, why? One could wish for Fr. Palmer's comments here but alas we will have to await the Parousia for that.

In the meantime my personal speculation goes as follows: Remembering that the business of prayer book revision in much of our tradition has been a matter of compromise between the Catholic and Evangelical wings of the Church, I can see this slight change as one of the ways to placate Evangelicals for some of the more Catholic introductions. Thus: When you pointed out the difference I began to use the 1962 prescribed order (it's still taking some getting used to) because I had been using the Eucharistic order unconsciously. Having done so, it now occurs to me that in the form provided for the Offices the people in the pews are given a natural order for locating the reading in their own Bibles. First the Book, then the chapter, then the verse. When you have the Propers already before you, as in the Eucharistic lectionary, the order of introduction is more a matter of information for those who can't read. I would suspect that this change came from those who felt that Everyman should be able easily to follow along in his own Bible at the Offices.

It's interesting to see what happened in the 1979 ECUSA book of prayers (by some called the Book of UnCommon Prayer). The introduction of the Office lessons and the Eucharist readings all follow yet another pattern, with which most of us are familiar if we've ever been to BAS, ECUSA or Roman services: "A Reading (Lesson) from _____" or "The Holy Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ according to _____." The usual pattern there is to skip all reference as to chapter and verse, leaving the man in the pew having no clue as to where he might find the reading for himself - or perhaps determine what's being left out. This change seems to assume either that the person in the pew will be supplied with endless pieces of reprinted scripture tidbits or that he's just too stupid to be able to find the passage for himself in his Bible!

So, the 1962 BCP order has, after all, the effect of providing everyone present with the ability to locate in an orderly fashion the passage being read. Not a bad thing at all, for either Evangelical or Catholic."

By **Fr. Richard P. Harris, S.S.C.** -
Fredericton Junction, NB

Who or what is the GOD of the modern, western Anglican Churches?

I want to suggest that there is a vast contrast between the doctrine of God proclaimed in the official Formularies (BCP, Ordinal and Articles) and Creeds (Apostles', Nicene and Athanasian), and the God of the practical theology which dominates western, Anglican Churches.

Dr. Philip Turner, who has such a penetrating and clear mind and a ready

pen, has provided for all who are willing to be instructed, in a recent essay, a description of the God who is named and invoked by a majority of clergy and institutional leaders of the Episcopal Church, U.S.A. (See the website of The Anglican Communion Institute for the essay.) I showed this essay to lay folks in leadership positions in the Church of England, and they said that it also well describes what is the prevailing practical theology (in contrast to the doctrines in the official formularies and church texts) of the dear, old Church of England, and the clergy who lead it.

In short, this Deity invoked by modern Anglicans is "the God who accepts" rather than the "God who saves and redeems." That is, in accepting us, this God is saving and redeeming us. Here is a brief summary of the message in my words:

"God is love and God loves all people. This divine love is particularly expressed in the acceptance of people as they exist in their normality, self-worth, dignity, orientation and searching for God. Thus the Gospel is the message that God in Jesus announces that all are welcome, that all are accepted just as they are, and that the Church is a community of celebration of human acceptance of people of all types. In Christian fellowship, the uniqueness, dignity and worth of all persons, just as they are, is affirmed and practiced. And the Eucharist is the family meal, the means whereby unity is created by sharing in a common meal and affirming one another in the "Peace" and the receiving of the same symbolic food. It is open to all, whether or not they have been baptized and whatever be the state of their heart and mind. The mission of the Church concerns human dignity and worth, peace and justice for all, since God is the God who accepts all creatures, whoever and whatever they are. So Baptism is the entry into this

community of celebration and represents a commitment to the mission of peace and justice."

In this scheme, Deity, who accepts people as they are, is often described (theologically speaking) in terms of a Trinity (e.g. Three Modes of Being or Three Expressions of Divinity), where Trinity becomes a model for human, fellowship, cooperation and acceptance in the Church on earth. However, in reality this God is more the God of Unitarianism or even Deism, and in some cases even Panentheism, than the traditional Trinitarian Theism of classical orthodoxy. Likewise, Jesus is the Son of God in the sense that he was adopted by God, filled with the Spirit and vision of God, and supremely involved in the mission of God.

Further, the estimate of human beings in this approach is a modern form of the ancient doctrine of Pelagianism. Thus a human being as a creature of God has an inherent worth and dignity, is the possessor of human rights whatever his or her status, condition or orientation, and does not need to be saved from sin. Rather he or she needs to be affirmed, accepted and blessed by God through the missionary work of the people of God. Conversion is being accepted by God and recognizing this. In Baptism each child of God is affirmed, given the right to the possibility of all ministries in the Church (as called to them), and commissioned to work with others for peace, justice and dignity for all. Then in the Eucharist each child of God is affirmed and strengthened for mission. At any stage he or she may feel a call to "the ministry" and thus lead the community in proclaiming the message of acceptance of all by God.

Sin is redefined through the categories of counseling and psychotherapy and thus repentance also has a new meaning -

accepting who you are and how much God loves you as you are.

So the Church is a community of celebration, not celebration of the mighty works of God in redemption, salvation and especially in the Incarnation, Atonement and Resurrection of Jesus the Christ (though this is mentioned); but, rather, celebration of human community and worth, that God accepts us all whatever be our condition, need and desires.

There is no doubt but that this message and this form of religion is acceptable to many middle-class people for it accords well with much that is taken for granted in culture and society these days. It seems to be so widely embracing, tolerant and affirming of all. It requires little change of heart and mind even if it requires time and commitment, as if it were a primary leisure activity.

There is however one group that it will not tolerate. This is the group who not only hold to the doctrines set forth in the classic Anglican Formularies but also believe them and accept them as summaries of biblical doctrine and morality. These traditionally-minded folks represent an enemy, a threat and a challenge for they undermine the Gospel of acceptance by seeking to proclaim a Gospel of redemption and a Christ of salvation.

And there is one practice that is not tolerated - the attending of the Eucharist and not communicating. This is seen as a rejection of the celebration of community and of everyone who participates. It is not only bad behavior, it is also the rejection of

the God who accepts. Clergy who do this in ECUSA can be prosecuted under canon law!

In summary, the real problem facing the Anglican Churches of the West/North is not the arrival of same-sex blessings and the like, it is the rejection of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, as he is known to us through sacred Scripture, holy tradition, devotional and worship experience and in the power of the proclaimed Gospel to save and redeem sinful man.

Kyrie eleison.

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