

The Parish of St. Edmund, King and Martyr

(Waterloo, Ontario)
www.stedmund.ca



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

UPDATE

April 11, 2007 - **St. Leo the Great**

May Schedule

May 1	Tuesday	St. Philip and St. James the Apostles
May 6	Sunday	The Fourth Sunday after Easter
May 13	Sunday	The Fifth Sunday after Easter
May 17	Thursday	Ascension Day
May 20	Sunday	The Sunday after Ascension Day
May 27	Sunday	The Day of Pentecost / Whitsunday

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 - **Major Holy Days** - the **Holy Eucharist** is *usually* celebrated at **7:00 p.m., 10:00 a.m.** on Saturday.

Notes and Comments

1) **Monthly Parish Lunch** - Just a reminder! Immediately following Mass, on the fourth Sunday of each month (not necessarily the last Sunday!) we meet for lunch and chatter in 'our' restaurant - Martin's.

2) **The Right Reverend Robert W.S. Mercer, CR** - our former Leader - will be celebrating the 30th anniversary of his consecration, as the fourth Bishop of Matabeleland (Zimbabwe), on May 1, 2007 - The Feast of St. Philip and St. James. (Afterwards, the third Bishop of The Anglican Catholic Church of Canada.) There will be a High Mass at St. Agatha's, Portsmouth, England on Saturday, May 5 to commemorate this event. Please remember him in your prayers.

3) A piece about our possible relationship with the Roman Catholic Church - **There's plenty of room for more** - this page.

4) For **Robert's Ramblings - Schoolboy religion** - see page 3.

5) Some help in countering the gay agenda - **But What do I Say?** - see page 6 - the fourth of four parts.

6) Refuse to choose - women deserve better - the second of several **Pro-Woman Answers to Pro-Choice Questions** - see page 7.

7) **Cardinal Speaks Out Against Global Warming Hysteria** - see page 8.

8) **Claims every Catholic should be able to answer** - the third of twelve parts - see page 9.

There's plenty of room for more

A big tent with lots of space

Last month in Ottawa, The Anglican Catholic Church [of Canada] - not to be confused with either the Anglican Church of Canada or the Catholic Church - consecrated two new bishops. According to all reports, it

was a moment of celebration for the small denomination, which, some 30 years ago, split off from mainstream Anglicanism over the ordination of women.

For Roman Catholics interested in ecumenical matters - more of us should be - the Anglican Catholics hold special interest. They are actively and officially pursuing reunion with Rome. They believe, in the words of their primate, that "there are no doctrinal or moral matters of such significance that they would prevent unity between this Communion and the Holy See."

Whether or not this claim is true is a question I gladly leave to the theologians to decide. Meanwhile, Catholics should welcome to the negotiating table everyone who comes knocking on our door, for whatever reason and with whatever historical baggage - but especially Anglicans of any stripe.

Alone among the churches of the Reformation, Anglicanism has always been graced, from the 16th century onward, by thinkers and leaders who genuinely desired to end the schism with Rome that Henry VIII inaugurated. Such people were often eclipsed, of course, during the centuries that British authorities, good Anglicans all, persecuted and violently suppressed Catholicism within the boundaries of England, Scotland and Ireland - but never mind. The promoters of unity have always been there in Anglicanism, and still are, witnessing to what they believe to be the Anglican communion's continuity with Catholicism in matters of faith and practice. One hears in the pleas for unity coming from the Anglican Catholic Church a very old melody.

While I know little about Anglican Catholics in particular, I know quite a bit about Anglicanism, having been a happy member of that communion for most of my adult life before my conversion to Roman Catholicism.

However passionate they are about reunion with Rome - and the Anglican Catholics seem passionate indeed - ecumenically minded Anglicans of whatever sort, in my experience, are understandably apprehensive about being squashed by the

huge Catholic Church. They are especially concerned lest some much-valued item of Anglican Christian experience - the splendid English liturgy, for instance, or the relative independence of bishops - be abolished by the Vatican bureaucracy or overwhelmed by the polyglot, multi-national character of the Catholic Church itself.

More seriously, despite all the good will and doctrinal agreement in the world, most Anglicans can't really stomach the practical reality of the modern, centralized papacy. And the very notion of having a universal moral arbiter installed at Rome runs counter to the nationalistic, democratic British history that has so deeply coloured the culture of Anglicanism in Britain and beyond. The barriers to Catholic-Anglican unity are higher now than ever, given mainstream Anglicanism's stand on the ordination of women and openly practising homosexuals; but barriers were always there, and could never be downplayed.

But let's suppose Canada's Anglican Catholics are indeed agreeable with Roman Catholic faith and order, and are ready in every other way to join forces with the Catholic Church. Is there any way they could be allowed to keep what's valuable in their traditions of worship and devotion? I see no reason why not. Anyway, the thing has been done.

In 1983, a group of former Episcopalians were received into the Catholic Church in San Antonio, Texas, and became the nucleus of Our Lady of the Atonement Church. This Roman Catholic parish is unique in its archdiocese, inasmuch as it has permission from Rome to worship according to rites drawn from the great Anglican source, *The Book of Common Prayer*. This parish has an active ministry among Texas Episcopalians who have become disenchanted, for whatever reason, with their church; and, in the midst of Catholicism, they bear witness to Anglicanism's best traditions of prayer and worship.

Armed with this precedent, the Canadian Anglican Catholics could quite possibly ask for the privilege of conducting their worship by the Prayer Book, and I see no reason why

they should be refused. Though it can look like a monolithic entity from the outside - that's surely the way many Anglicans see it - the Catholic Church is a very big tent, with space for numerous rites and usages. Perhaps it's time we moved over and made room for one more.

By **John Bentley Mays** - in *The Catholic Register* - February 25, 2007

Robert's Ramblings

Schoolboy religion

"It appertaineth to the office of a deacon to instruct the youth in the catechism"
(*The Form and Manner of Making of Deacons*)

The school in Port Elizabeth which I attended for 10 years was founded in 1856 by Sir George Grey, a colonial governor who acquired a good reputation for enlightened administration in New Zealand and in the Cape Colony. By South African standards the school was therefore quite old. As soon as you were born your father enrolled you for admission because he and your grandfather had been there, perhaps even your great grandfather. Pupils were normally dayboys but there were 150 of us boarders whose homes might be as far away as Botswana or Zambia. We regarded ourselves as the cream even though, unfortunately for us, the headmaster or Rector lived in a handsome rectory right next door to our quarters. The Rector was normally a personage in the city.

Twice a Sunday boarders were fell in and marched off in crocodiles, or columns of two, to attend Divine Service at the sacred hours of 11 am and 7 pm. A master inspected us before we set off under the supervision of prefects who had authority to beat us for misbehaviour. Port Elizabeth prided itself on being the Windy City. Banshees howled and wailed, windows and doors rattled, litter blew about the streets, flying sand got into hair and eyes or stung bare legs and arms. Even the great big hands on the city's three clocktowers couldn't compete against the wind. The times and chimes of these clocks were often wrong. I have disliked wind ever since and

regard it as an unhappy image of the Holy Spirit (*John* 3, 8). Back home in Zimbabwe there was hardly any wind. School uniform included a hard flat straw hat nicknamed a cheesecutter or basher. We were allowed to break rank from crocodile in order to retrieve a cheesie flung by the wind at the wheels of an approaching tram.

The Church of the Province of South Africa had few really low parishes but Port Elizabeth possessed one. Holy Trinity was not so much evangelical as low. To it boarders from Junior Grey were sent for full blown mattins without any dumbing down. An earlier Rector of Grey School, a Mr Johnson, had doubled up as Rector of Trinity. Of course small boys couldn't understand the erudite sermons of my godfather who originated in the Church of Ireland, and who had the incumbency of Trinity for some 30 years after he had been a priest in Zimbabwe. A well meaning churchwarden suggested that boys between the ages of seven and thirteen would be better off in Sunday School, but we'd have none of this. Grown ups had cars, cigarettes, sex and drink. We couldn't wait to grow up, and if mattins was for grown ups it was for us. Sunday School in a Victorian hall hung about with sepia pictures of Boaz in a field of corn, was for kids and sissies. (*Ruth* 2, 1ff)

However, it was at Holy Trinity that learned about the real presence and about the eucharistic sacrifice, and it was from my godfather that I learned to pray the angelus. Rectors of Trinity, as distinct from Rectors of Grey School, were tractarian in doctrine if not in ceremonial. One of them, Dr Hewitt, so disliked the churchmanship of his own parish that he made his son worship in the anglo catholic St Peter's in a poorer part of town. That son grew up to become the holy and much loved Fr Harry Chichele Hewitt, confessor and friend to many. My godfather had lots of anglo catholic friends, including members of SSM and CR. It was in his rectory that I met my first CR Father, Maurice Bradshaw of Sekhukhuniland, on holiday at the sea. If parishioners of Trinity didn't thron the early communion it was not because they despised the sacrament; it was because they revered it. Tom, Dick and Harry feared to eat and drink to their

own damnation (*I Corinthians* 11, 27 - 29). Frequent communion was only for spiritual athletes ie Miss Marks and her sisters, Miss Alice and Miss Vivienne. Communicants fasted not only from food but also from speech. Communicants did not go gallivanting on Saturday nights. Communicants meditated on the collect, epistle and gospel beforehand; said offices of preparation before and of thanksgiving after; examined their consciences against the 10 commandments. I can still see the Misses Marks walking to early service on Sundays, Tuesdays and Thursdays, one behind the other lest they fall into idle chatter.

At Sunday mattins the congregation stood stiffly to attention for the monotoning of the Apostles' creed, which seemed to be a kind of national anthem for Christians. Every head bowed at the sacred name. Boys sat behind the girls from our sister school and we thought it fun to watch the girls' straw hats bobbing with the precision of chorus girls in a line - for six months of the year, that is. For the other six months girls were sent to the high church of St Mary at the bottom of the hill. Trinity stood atop the same hill. It had broken away from St Mary's even before the start of the Oxford movement, because its Rector observed such papistical practices as the Prayer Book rubrics: he took up alms at the communion, and he wore a surplice when preaching, as done in the second year of the reign of King Edward the VIth.

From Senior Grey older boys were sent to St Cuthbert's where the churchmanship was Union Jack. The kalendar was peculiar to the parish: Delville Wood Sunday, Somme Sunday, Trafalgar Sunday. Mattins was dumbed down, not only for the benefit of schoolboys but also for that of sailors, soldiers and airmen on church parade: seven verses of the *Venite*, thirteen verses of the *Te Deum*, short psalms only, one canticle only, one lesson only. Sermons were brief and witty. An elderly lady complained that the Rector had repeated an earlier sermon, so on the following Sunday he broke off to interject, "Stop me if you've heard this one". The Rector might sport a khaki cassock, medals on his scarf, gaiters and shovel hat. All through mangled mattins could be heard the cheerful clink of bottles and glasses in

preparation for "the little get togethah afterwards" in the hall, from which parishioners *per se* were excluded. It was this Rector who prepared us for confirmation, dictating notes at high speed; who interviewed us in the headmaster's study, where the cane stood behind the door, "Tell me, Mercer, have you had any experience of women?" He was archdeacon, chaplain to the mayor, chaplain to the forces, writer of funny leaders for the local newspaper, a "character" about town. Facile misjudgement might write him off as "not a spiritual man", but those who had cause to know discovered him to be a sheep in wolf's clothing who did much good in secret. He returned from the see city of Grahamstown where the Bishop and his wife were giving temporary accommodation to some female teachers. Back in Port Elizabeth the Archdeacon bumped into my godfather from Trinity and said in conspiratorial tones, "I say, old boy, I've just discovered that his lordship keeps all his mistresses togethah on the ground floor".

Once a term we were allowed to worship anywhere we chose. I accompanied a Zambian friend to his Presbyterian church, who later ended up as a minister in New Zealand. I found the sermon neither too difficult nor too long, until the Minister said, "Now the children can leave for their Sunday School", and proceeded to preach the adult sermon of forty minutes. The atmosphere was certainly one of profound reverence. Congregants wore their best clothes, brought their own Bibles, arrived in good time, prepared for worship to begin by reading or prayer. Silence reigned. The Minister was led to the pulpit by a verger in a gown carrying a large Bible, which he placed on a velvet cushion. The Minister thanked nobody for coming, flattered nobody, enquired after nobody's birthday or favourite hymn. Instead he began, "Let us worship God".

But my favourite church was St Mary's, allegedly haunted by the ghosts of two former Rectors buried beneath its chancel, Dr Wirgman and Canon Mayo. One of the ghosts was reputed to play the organ at night, the other to flit through the closed door of the chapter house in order to attend weddings. Eric Rosenthal in his book of

South African ghost stories devoted a chapter to the Collegiate Church of St Mary. A mid Victorian Bishop of Grahamstown had given it a constitution which provided a college of priests associate, who had minimal duties and their own stalls in choir. This in preparation for the day when there'd be a new diocese of Port Elizabeth and St Mary's would be its cathedral. So in choir alongside my godfather, Mr Troughton of Trinity, and alongside Archdeacon Powell of St Cuthbert's, sat Fr Gutch of the Chinese parish of St Francis Xavier, where the crucifix, the stations, and the Marian shrine had figures with Chinese features. St Mary's had clouds of incense, beneficial sermons, magnificent music, armies of choristers and servers, dim religious light, and best of all, parishioners who were not exclusively paleface. The gospel procession at high mass reminded one of the Bible procession in the Presbyterian church.

No deacon ever instructed me in the catechism *per se*, not even the Archdeacon of Port Elizabeth, but I may have learned things by osmosis. Faith is caught rather than taught. And I owe something to the priests who being still deacons, ministered to me at boarding school, as well as to the Rector, five assistant curates and three nuns of CR Grahamstown who ministered back home in Bulawayo.

+Robert Mercer CR

The retired, Third Bishop of The Anglican Catholic Church of Canada

From here and there

1) It is more important to worship God in a hut or room with Christ's faithful remnant where He will be found than in the most glorious buildings where, because of denial of the Faith and a turning to man-made speculations, He is not. **Fr. Brian Gill**, Vicar General, TTAC, in his March 2007 newsletter.

2) By **Lord Byron** (1788 – 1824):

Words are things; and a small drop of ink
Falling like dew upon a thought, produces
That which makes thousands, perhaps
millions, think.

3) **Unbelievable!**

Terrence Dickson of Bristol, Pennsylvania, was leaving a house he had just finished robbing by way of the garage. He was unable to get the garage door to go up since the automatic door opener was malfunctioning. He couldn't re-enter the house because the door connecting the house and the garage locked when he pulled it shut. The family was on vacation, and Mr. Dickson found himself locked in the garage for eight days. He subsisted on a case of Pepsi he found, and a large bag of dry dog food. He sued the homeowner's insurance claiming the situation caused him undue mental anguish. The jury agreed, to the tune of \$500,000!

But What do I Say? - (4 of 4)

The gay-activist movement is finding its way into more and more schools - promoting destructive behavior under the guise of tolerance. How can you ensure that the truth gets a fair hearing?

Sources of confusion

You recall that Laura's fellow teachers were confused about more than just sexuality. For example they were confused about what it means to endorse something ("we're just presenting homosexuality as an alternative lifestyle"), about the authority to teach right and wrong ("don't you believe in tolerance?"), about the meaning of love ("what happened to your compassion?") and about the relation between church and state ("leave your faith at the schoolhouse door").

What can you do about these other sources of confusion?

Teaching through conversation

These issues are prickly - make no mistake. You'll find, though, that if only your colleagues can be brought to understand the human sexual design, their other confusions will be a little more manageable. The best time to explain this design is in private conversation, before your committee meets to make decisions. Why? Simple: in the meeting itself, there won't be time. Not

only that, but you'll be interrupted constantly, and if your colleagues don't have a good understanding of the issue already, your energy will be dissipated in "putting out fires." Another good reason to make the most of private conversation is that tempers are less likely to flare between two people than in a group.

When you converse, be gentle, be patient and listen carefully - but stick to your guns. It's all a matter of getting back to the basics of design. If your conversational partner is open to hearing about the Designer, too, that's great! But if not, don't worry about it - that may happen some other time. Your task at the moment is to resist the gay agenda.

Knowing how to use sound bites

If you've explained the human sexual design in private conversation, then the "sound bites" to which you'll be limited in committee meetings will have a better chance of hitting home.

By "sound bites" I mean just two or three sentences that get your point across fast before you're interrupted. If people don't already know about the subtleties of the human sexual design, of the procreative and unitive purposes, this isn't the time to go into them. Focus on the obvious - on death and disease. Be blunt. Don't be reluctant to repeat yourself. Let your opponents speak, but don't let them change the subject.

If your colleagues say in a meeting, "We're not endorsing homosexuality, we're just presenting it as an alternative lifestyle," then don't even argue about what it means to "endorse" something. Just say something like this:

Okay, you're not endorsing; you're presenting. But we all know that not every lifestyle is "presentable." Homosexual behavior is a ticket to disease and early death. Sexual acts that kill should be no more "presentable" than drug addiction.

If your colleagues say in the meeting, "Morality is just a matter of opinion - don't

you believe in being tolerant?" then don't even argue about the meaning of morality. Just say something like this:

We all believe in tolerance, but we all know that tolerance doesn't mean being open to everything. Habitual homosexual acts cut years from one's life span, and despite all of our teaching about "safe sex," those who practice them are thousands of times more likely to get AIDS. As teachers, how can we tell kids not to commit suicide - but to go ahead and commit suicidal forms of sex?

If your colleagues say in the meeting, "Homosexual kids can't help their feelings - haven't you any compassion?" then don't even argue about whether they can help their feelings. Just say something like this:

If I didn't believe in love and compassion for our children, I wouldn't be a teacher. But love and compassion mean doing what's good for them. Condemning them to a life of pain, disease and early death is the most uncompassionate thing we can do.

If your colleagues say in the meeting, "Church and state are separate - leave your faith at the schoolhouse door," then don't even argue about whether expressions of religious belief should be permitted in public schools. Just say something like this:

This isn't about the church, because even atheists oppose needless disease and death. We teach students in health class to avoid sweets so they won't get cavities; why shouldn't we teach them to avoid homosexual acts so they won't get syphilis or AIDS?

Three final tips

There are three more things you can do.

Remember that the best defense is a good offense. Don't just respond to the proposals of gay advocates; get in there with your proposals first. Remember that explicitly religious speakers and programs have no chance of approval. That's all right; your immediate goal isn't conversion, but saving

students from deadly propaganda.

Keep parents informed of everything the school is considering. Do this in the open, so that you can't be criticized. Remember, most parents want to protect their children even more strongly than you do! The problem is that they don't know what's going on.

Organize. Get together with like-minded people in your own school as well as others. Be willing to cooperate with anyone who opposes the gay agenda, whether or not he shares your faith. You mustn't compromise your faith, but that doesn't mean you should throw away potential allies.

Laura Lopez can counter the gay agenda in her public school - and you can counter it in yours. You just have to be prepared.

By **J. Budziszewski** - the fourth of four parts

Pro-Woman Answers to Pro-Choice Questions

Isn't feminism about a woman having rights equal to those of a man?

Feminism is much more than that.

As a teen, I remember the electrifying call for equality during the '70s women's movement, and how it challenged and changed the nation. The idea was so compelling it still circles the world.

By definition, equality is a principle extended to all. When one group of people gets their rights at the expense of another, there is nothing equal about it.

The foundation of feminism is built on the basic tenets of nonviolence, nondiscrimination, and justice for all. Abortion is discrimination based on age, size, location, and sometimes gender, disability, or parentage. And it is often the result of a more insidious form of discrimination: the lack of resources and support that pregnant women need and deserve.

As I entered college, the women's movement continued to gain momentum. Cries for equality in the workplace were muffled by the even louder call for "abortion rights" and "pro-choice." You were either pro-woman or pro-baby. As a pro-life feminist, I felt very much alone.

When I found Feminists for Life I knew that I was "home." Then I learned that during the past two centuries, visionary women like Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Mary Wollstonecraft, and Alice Paul had worked for justice and women's rights - *without choosing between women and children.*

Elizabeth Cady Stanton is perhaps the best example of the in - your - face, you - will - accept - women - on - *our* - terms - and - we - are - not - accepting - less suffrage leaders. Stanton, the first champion of women's suffrage and a mother of seven, said, "When you consider that women have been treated as property, it is degrading to women that we should treat our children as property to be disposed of as we see fit."

The early American feminists did not work to replace a patriarchy with a matriarchy. Women have a right to be *women* in the workplace and in school. Women shouldn't have to pass as men.

When women think they have to lay their bodies down or swallow a bitter pill for an abortion in order to compete in the workplace or make their way in the world - that is not feminism. In addition, abortion has hurt women by diverting feminist attention from other issues, particularly those that help mothers, such as affordable child care, comprehensive health care, and a living wage.

Finally, once a woman is pregnant, she is forever changed, no matter what the outcome - marital, partnered or single parenthood, adoption, abortion, miscarriage or stillbirth.

At Feminists for Life, we refuse to choose between women and children. We refuse to choose between our education and career plans and our families.

As pro-life feminists, our values are woman-centered and inclusive of both parents and children. And like the early American feminists, we are not accepting less.

We say "no" to the status quo. Let's aim for the best by advocating resources and support for women, and protecting both mothers and children from violence. Women deserve better.

By **Serrin M. Foster**, President, *Feminists for Life*

Cardinal Speaks Out Against Global Warming Hysteria

At first glance, one might question the relevance of religious opinions on the issue of anthropogenic global warming. However, given the cult-like fervor being exhibited on this subject by the media of late, maybe what the world needs is a little balance to add a modicum of sanity to the growing hysteria.

With that in mind, Cardinal George Pell of Sydney, Australia, wrote an op-ed in the *Sunday Telegraph* last week cautioning readers about the zealotry being exhibited by those convinced that man is destroying the planet:

We have been subjected to a lot of nonsense about climate disasters, as some zealots have been presenting extreme scenarios to frighten us.

They claim ocean levels are about to rise spectacularly, there could be the occasional tsunami as high as an eight-storey building, and the Amazon Basin could be destroyed as the ice cap in the Arctic and Greenland melts.

The Cardinal then gave some recent examples of just how absurd the zealotry is getting:

An overseas magazine called for Nuremberg-style trials for global-warming sceptics, and a US television correspondent compared sceptics to "Holocaust deniers".

A local newspaper editorial's complaint about the doomsayers' religious enthusiasm is unfair to mainstream Christianity.

He continued:

What we were seeing from the doomsayers was an induced dose of mild hysteria - semi-religious if you like, but dangerously close to superstition.

The Cardinal then presented some facts:

We know that enormous climate changes have occurred in world history - for example, the ice ages and Noah's flood, when human causation could only have been negligible.

Nor should it be too surprising to learn that during the past 100 years, the media has alternated between promoting fear of a new ice age and fear of global warming.

Terrible droughts are not infrequent in Australian history, sometimes lasting seven or eight years.

We all know that a cool January doesn't mean much in the long run.

But neither does evidence based on only a few years.

Scaremongers have used temperature fluctuations over limited periods and in a few places to misrepresent longer patterns.

Warming evidence is mixed and often exaggerated but can be reassuring.

Global warming has been increasing constantly since 1975 at the rate of less than one-fifth of a degree Celsius per decade.

The concentration of carbon dioxide increased surface temperatures more in winter than in summer, especially in mid and high latitudes over land, while there was a global cooling of the stratosphere. Britain's University of East Anglia climate research unit found global temperatures

did not rise between 1998 and 2005, and a NASA satellite recently found the southern hemisphere had not warmed in the past 25 years.

Is mild global warming a northern phenomenon?

We may have been alarmed by the sighting of an iceberg as large as an aircraft carrier off Dunedin, but we should be consoled by the news that the Antarctic is getting colder and the ice is growing there.

The Cardinal marvelously concluded:

The science is certainly more complicated than the propaganda.

Well, not to the doomsayers.

By **Noel Sheppard** - February 20, 2007

Claims every Catholic should be able to answer - 3 of 12

Freedom of speech is a great thing. Unfortunately, it comes at an unavoidable price: When citizens are free to say what they want, they'll sometimes use that freedom to say some pretty silly things. And that's the case with the 12 claims we're about to cover. Some of them are made over and over, others are rare (though worth addressing). Either way, while the proponents of these errors are free to promote them, we as Catholics have a duty to respond. Hopefully, this special CRISIS Magazine e-Report will help you do just that. These errors are widespread, and it's our responsibility to correct them. So, at long last, I present to you 12 claims EVERY Catholic should be able to answer.

3. "The Old and New Testaments contradict one another in numerous places. If an omnipotent God inspired the Bible, He would never have allowed these errors."

This is a common claim, one found all over the internet (especially on atheist and free-thought websites). An article on the

American Atheists website notes that "What is incredible about the Bible is not its divine authorship; it's that such a concoction of contradictory nonsense could be believed by anyone to have been written by an omniscient God."

Such a statement is generally followed by a list of Biblical "contradictions." However, claims of contradictions make a few simple errors. For example, critics fail to read the various books of the Bible in line with the genre in which they were written. The Bible is, after all, a collection of several kinds of writing . . . history, theology, poetry, apocalyptic material, etc. If we try to read these books in the same wooden way in which we approach a modern newspaper, we're going to be awfully confused.

And the list of Bible "contradictions" bears this out. Take, for example, the first item on the American Atheist's list:

"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy." Exodus 20:8

Versus . . .

"One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind." Romans 14:5

There! the atheist cries, A clear contradiction. But what the critic neglects to mention is something every Christian knows: When Christ instituted the New Covenant, the ceremonial requirements of the Old Covenant were fulfilled (and passed away). And so it makes perfect sense that Old Testament ceremonial rules would no longer stand for the people of the New Covenant.

If the critic had understood this simple tenet of Christianity, he wouldn't have fallen into so basic an error.

The next item on the American Atheist list is similarly flawed:

". . . the earth abideth for ever." Ecclesiastes 1:4

Versus . . .

". . . the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up."

So, the Old Testament claims that the earth will last forever, while the New says it will eventually be destroyed. How do we harmonize these? Actually, it's pretty easy, and it again comes from understanding the genre in which these two books were written.

Ecclesiastes, for example, contrasts secular and religious worldviews - and most of it is written from a secular viewpoint. That's why we find lines like, "Bread is made for laughter, and wine gladdens life, and money answers everything." (Ecclesiastes 10:19)

However, at the end of the book, the writer throws us a twist, dispensing with all the "wisdom" he'd offered and telling us to "Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man." (12:13)

If a reader stops before the end, he'll be as confused as the critic at American Atheists. However, since the viewpoint that gave birth to the notion of an eternal earth is rejected in the last lines of the book, there's obviously no contradiction with what was later revealed in the New Testament. (And this is just one way to answer this alleged discrepancy.)

The other "contradictions" between the Old and New Testaments can be answered similarly. Almost to an item, the critics who use them confuse context, ignore genre, and refuse to allow room for reasonable interpretation.

No thinking Christian should be disturbed by these lists.

By **Deal W. Hudson** in *crisis* magazine

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