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# Inclusive Language Liturgies: The Renunciation of Revelation<sup>1</sup>

DAVID CURRY

The Inclusive Language Liturgies, now in our midst, are encouraged for experimental use by the institutional authorities of the Church (*Supplemental Liturgical Texts*, Prayer Book Studies 30, Church Hymnal Corporation, New York, 1989). These liturgies present a host of problems about which we need to begin to think clearly and theologically. They belong to our present-day confusions and may be seen to manifest the heart of the problem: the denial of Revelation both in form and in substance. Consequently, they provide a commentary upon the sophisticated illiteracy of our contemporary decadence and illustrate the relentless diminishment of a proper and full understanding of our common humanity. In short, they can be seen to manifest the contemporary dilemma, which we might call, for the sake of a slogan, 'the Retreat from Chalcedon'. Yet they can also be seen to provide an opportunity for us to rethink and remember what has been forgotten, namely, the character and nature of Revelation.

The dilemma is twofold: the forgetting of God in His Revelation of Himself to man and the forgetting of the essential nature of man to whom God reveals Himself and whom God redeems to Himself. Such a forgetting is not the stated intent of the compilers and promoters of the Inclusive Language Liturgies, but I think that it is at once the conclusion and the presupposition, whether wittingly or unwittingly, of the entire enterprise. The character of Revelation as *Mediation*, the action of God towards us, has been supplanted by projections of human constructs and imaginings. God must be 'made' or at least worshipped in the image and idiom of our own self-determinations.

The problem shows itself in the texts themselves and in the arguments advanced in their favour<sup>2</sup>. In fact, the compelling need for self-justification and explanation helps to make even clearer the deficiencies of the texts. These new liturgies, we are told, are intended to supplement and enrich, not replace, the present liturgies of the Church. With the exception of the planned obsolescence of Rite I in the 1979 book, this is probably true. It is probably good strategy for securing the adoption of these supplemental liturgical

texts. It would seem that the liturgical mandarins of the Episcopal Church have decided that the way to deal with the feminist programme is to allow a *smorgasbord* of liturgical alternatives for each and every interest or pressure group. For in their view liturgy is shaped and determined by the faith community—do not ask what faith, only ask *whose* faith. Language, moreover, is the instrument of the expression of the particular interest group's will to power.

Ironically, these texts are likely to please no one, neither the feminists, for whom they do not go far enough—there is no explicit 'God our Mother'—nor classical Anglicans, for whom a doctrinal understanding of Scripture, which acknowledges the priority of certain images and names over others, is essential. Yet, in principle the Episcopal Church has no logical (let alone theological) defence against Carter Heyword's 'O God our Mother—Father who art in Heaven' or Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza's 'woman church' of 'self-identified women and women-identified men'. For these feminists, the Scriptures are 'not the words of God but the words of men' and since they were written by men, the language is necessarily 'phallogocentric'. Consequently, a feminist interpretation of the Bible is required 'that can do justice to women's experiences of the Bible as a thoroughly patriarchal book written in androcentric language as well as to women's experience of the Bible as a source of empowerment and vision in our struggle for liberation'<sup>3</sup>.

I mention Fiorenza because in a refreshing way she provides the clear logic and direction of these Inclusive Language Liturgies. She spells out the four stages of this feminist hermeneutic: 'the hermeneutics of suspicion', 'the hermeneutics of remembrance', 'the hermeneutics of proclamation', and 'the hermeneutics of actualization'. Self-identified women, and women-identified men in the bosom of women, church-dance through 'the hermeneutics of suspicion'—for the Scriptures are the words of men not God—, through 'the hermeneutics of remembrance'—for the Scriptures contain some words of women, both the voices of the experience of oppression and the cries of the hopes for liberation—, through 'the hermeneutics of proclamation'—for the selective remembering of the past measured by the experience of women in the present creates a vision for the future—, to the final 'hermeneutics of actualization' in which the community of women's experience celebrates itself 'in story and in song, in ritual and meditation, as a people of the "God with us" who was the God of Judith as well as of Jesus.'

From the standpoint of such a feminist programme these texts clearly do not go far enough because they simply stand alongside other texts (traditional or semi-traditional) whose equivalence cannot be accepted since the older forms are in principle sexist and patriarchal. As she claims, 'a feminist quadrilateral, must. . . insist that all texts identified as sexist or patriarchal should not be retained in

the lectionary and be proclaimed in Christian worship or catechesis'. Interestingly enough, it is the principle of equivalence here that renders these 'supplemental' texts unacceptable to classical Anglicans as well!

What is the principle of equivalence? Perhaps an example from these texts will suffice as an illustration. In the daily offices of Morning and Evening Prayer, these new supplemental liturgical texts provide an alternative to the *Gloria Patri*. The *Gloria Patri* regularly punctuates our life of common prayer and especially belongs to our Christian use of the Psalter and other scriptural canticles, turning them into fully Christian hymns. It is a concluding ascription of glory to the God who has revealed Himself in His fulness and truth through our Lord Jesus Christ as Father, Son and Holy Ghost. The Rite II version of the *Gloria Patri* may not be as felicitously and precisely phrased as the traditional English form, but it is not doctrinally deficient as regards the Trinitarian identity of God the Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

The Rite II version is:

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever. Amen.

The alternative is:

Honour and glory to the holy and undivided Trinity, God who creates, redeems, and inspires: One in Three and Thee in One, for ever and ever. Amen.

This alternative form cannot be said to be equivalent to the *Gloria Patri*. It is less than a full statement of the Trinity for the simple reason that it attempts to avoid precisely what cannot be avoided, namely, the identity of the Trinity in the Divine Persons of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Consequently, the alternative form says less than what the *Gloria Patri* says. Thus, it is not equivalent doctrinally. Yet the *Gloria Patri* properly functions in the liturgy both devotionally and doctrinally—a point made abundantly clear by classical Anglican divines in their understanding of the liturgy. Richard Hooker, for example, argues for the essential doctrinal conjunction between ministering baptism, confessing the Christian faith, and giving glory 'for matter of doctrine about the Trinity.' He begins, moreover, by quoting St. Basil as representing, one may say, the mind of the Fathers on this matter.<sup>4</sup>

We must (saith St. Basil) as we have received even so baptize and as we baptize even so believe, and as we believe even so give glory. Baptizing we use the name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Ghost; confessing the Christian faith we declare our belief in the Father, and

in the Son, and in the Holy Ghost; ascribing glory unto God we give it to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost. It is *apodeixis tou orthou phronēmatos* 'the token of a true and sound understanding' for matter of doctrine about the Trinity, when in ministering baptism, and making confession, and giving glory there is a conjunction of all three, and no one of the three severed from the other two.

Theology, like good poetry, ought to be 'something of great constancy'<sup>5</sup> and its liturgical expression, something of 'reasoned continuance.'<sup>6</sup> The alternative form of the *Gloria Patri* introduces an inconstancy for it severs what must be co-joined and breaks from what must be reasonably continued. The alternative form presents a diminished view of what must be clearly professed as the heart and substance of the Christian faith—the faith into which we are baptized, the faith which we must constantly confess, the faith which we must ever express when giving glory to God in the fulness of His truth and life, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. The omission of the names of the Divine Persons of the Trinity renders the alternative unacceptable because it is not doctrinally equivalent. The omission constitutes a diminution to the fulness of God's Revelation of Himself in the Scriptures.

The point, perhaps, may be further appreciated by considering the historical emergence of the *Gloria Patri* as a doctrinal or, in John Henry Blunt's words, a 'dogmatic anthem'. Blunt's useful study *The Annotated Book of Common Prayer* provides an account of the scriptural and doctrinal reasons for the historical appearance of this anthem in Christian liturgical use. It bears quoting in full.<sup>7</sup>

[This] beautiful dogmatic anthem. . . is of primitive origin, and, if not an independently inspired form, is naturally traceable to the angelic hymns in Isaiah vi. 3, and Luke ii. 13, the Trinitarian form of it being equally traceable to that of the baptismal formula ordained by our Lord in Matt. xxviii. 19. Clement of Alexandria, who wrote before the end of the second century, refers to the use of this hymn under the form, *Ainountes Tō monō patri kai hwiō kai Tō hāgiō pneumati*, 'giving glory to the one Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost,' and a hymn of about the same date is printed by Dr. Routh, in which there is an evident trace of the same custom: *hymnoumen patera kai hwion, kai hagian pneuma theou*. 'Praise we the Father and Son, and Holy Spirit of God'. It is also referred to even earlier by Justin Martyr. The Arian heretics made a great point of using Church phraseology in their own novel and heretical sense; and they adopted the custom of singing their hymn in the form, 'Glory be to the Father, by the Son, and in the Holy Ghost', which evaded the recognition of each Person as God. It thus became necessary for the Church to adopt a form less capable of perversion; and in ancient liturgies it is found as it is still used in the Easter Church. 'Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost. . .'

In short, there can be no alternative to the traditional *Gloria Patri* or,

at least, not one that deliberately avoids the names of the Divine Persons. It is precisely this desire to avoid these names that renders the whole project suspect. At the deepest level, such a proposal represents a profound rejection or forgetting of Trinitarian Dogma, the essence of Revelation itself. The spiritual substance of God in His eternal being, eternal knowing and eternal willing—the perfection and completeness of His self-sufficient life—is made known through the names of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Ghost, names which convey not the sexual or the psycho-socio-political reality of God but the spiritual reality of the ever-living God. Orthodox Christianity knows, reveres and professes this as the doctrinal content of the Scriptures *par excellence*.

The alternative cannot be justified on the grounds that it does not replace, but supplements, the traditional form of the *Gloria Patri*. For if the alternative is used, then it is used in place of the doctrinally explicit *Gloria Patri* as something deliberately less explicit about the Divine Persons whom piety and truth rightly seek to glorify. The intent in the alternative is to say less, not more, about the essential mystery of God who is revealed. The argument that it may supplement the traditional form is specious because the supplemental character of the alternative belongs to another order of divine activity. It can only be said to supplement by way of expression about the ‘modal’ or, at best, ‘economic’ activity of God—the ‘God who creates, redeems, and inspires’. Yet these divine activities are secondary to the primary activity of the inner Trinitarian life of God the Father, Son and Holy Ghost upon which the activities of creation, redemption and sanctification properly depend. The use of the verb ‘inspires’, moreover, fails to capture the full doctrinal sense of the sanctifying activity of the Person of the Holy Spirit.

But the alternative will not work as a supplement for a very simple reason. For where glory is wanted to be ascribed to God Himself, glory is given, instead, to what God does; His activity towards us is honoured rather than God in Himself. Thus, the alternative supplements only by way of the economic activity of God, but at the expense of His essential and personal activity.

The alternative is further unacceptable because, at the very least, it is more patient of a heterodox understanding of the Trinity than it declares the orthodox faith in God the Holy Trinity. By omitting the names of the Divine Persons and by emphasizing, instead, the extrinsic functions of creating, redeeming and inspiring, the proposed formula may actually be seen to promote a modalist understanding of God. In such a view, Father, Son and Holy Ghost are not really names signifying the personal Trinitarian identity of God but instead modes or functions of God’s activity in creation, redemption and sanctification. God ‘appears’ now in one mode as Father, then as Son, and then as Holy Ghost; now in one mode as Creator, then as

Redeemer and then as Sanctifier. From the standpoint of the Fathers this does not do justice to God's Revelation of Himself in the Holy Scriptures nor does it provide a satisfactory account of the full extent and meaning of creation, redemption and sanctification which are to be understood as truly and fully Trinitarian activities—the whole Trinity is involved in each. The activity proper to one person of the Trinity cannot be separated from their divine unity; in all things they work co-operatively and inseparably.

The tendency to retreat from the explicitly Scriptural revelation of God as Father, Son and Holy Ghost appears most dramatically in the supplemental forms of the Holy Eucharist which deliberately avoid the terms 'Son' and 'Father' almost completely and severely reduce the use of 'Lord' as often as possible. Ironically, the Nicene Creed stands as testimony to the orthodox faith over and against the express intent of these eucharistic liturgies in which it is, at least, allowed to be used. The explicitly Trinitarian hymn *Gloria in excelsis Deo* has been altogether removed from the eucharist and has been replaced by the canticle *Dignus es*, which focuses on redemption by the blood of the Lamb. Yet even here they have not been able to avoid tinkering with the text as it is found in the Rite II language of the 1979 book. 'O Lord our God' has been altered to 'O God most High'<sup>8</sup> for which there is no warrant in the Greek text of the Book of Revelation from which the canticle derives: '*ho Kyrios kai ho Theos hēmon* cannot honestly be rendered as 'O God most high', a change for which they provide no explanation.

The Trinitarian conclusion to the eucharistic prayers has been deliberately altered so as to avoid Son and Father. The eucharist becomes no longer our participation in the Son's thanksgiving to the Father but a celebration of the 'faith' community's self-determination into which Christ is collapsed and rendered captive:

We are the body of Christ:  
the broken body and the blood poured out.<sup>9</sup>

But is the uniqueness of Christ and the total sufficiency of His sacrifice adequately safeguarded and expressed here? Does 'broken body and blood poured out' refer to Christ or to ourselves in our brokenness and incompleteness? We are the body of Christ by the extension of His saving grace not by the assertion of our suffering experiences.

Here, moreover, in a further twisting of the words and intent of St. Augustine, the community is bidden to respond:

We behold who we are  
May we become one with the One we receive<sup>10</sup>

the One who apparently is Christ but a Christ shorn of His Lordship and Sonship.

Nowhere does the banality of an ideology in flight from Christian orthodoxy show itself more clearly than in these eucharistic liturgies, in which we are given to pray such things as: 'Draw us, O God, to your heart in the heart of the world'.<sup>11</sup> The image is drawn, it is claimed, 'from English Renaissance poetry'<sup>12</sup>. Yet the context here discloses the ideological tendency of these liturgies. For whether such a 'God' can be said to be the God of Heaven and Earth or instead a 'God' who is Mother Earth, this 'God' is apparently not God the Father, Son and Holy Ghost of Christian Revelation, according to the intent of these liturgies.

At best, we could say that these liturgies express the 'immanence' of God, but we would also have to say that this is at the expense of God's transcendence'. Yet, for the advocates of these liturgies, the 'transcendence' of God provides the excuse and explanation for this focus upon 'immanence', God's 'heart in the heart of the world'. For the presupposition of these liturgies is that God has become so utterly transcendent as to be completely indifferent if not altogether irrelevant. Such is a denial of Revelation. The predominance of the terms 'transcendence' and 'immanence' in contemporary theological debate belongs to the falling away from Trinitarian thought, wherein the infinite self-relation of God as Trinity is the ground of His relation to all else.

What follows from this anti-Trinitarian ideology is a confusion about creation. The clear distinction between Creator and created, the sense of creation *ex nihilo* by the *fiat* of God's Word, and the true meaning of man made in the image of God are rendered ambiguously in these liturgies. To be sure, the term creation is frequently used, but the spiritual independence of God from the world, upon whom all creation is totally dependent, is not consistently expressed. God is not always said to create, but instead is allowed to have 'made ready the creation'.<sup>13</sup>

The world comes to be not by God's Word, but by the bringing to birth through 'your Spirit', here interestingly conflated with 'your Wisdom' which is, properly speaking, an attribute of divinity and not a Divine Person. 'Humankind', too, is said to have been brought to birth through 'your Spirit' and elsewhere to have been 'included in creation'.<sup>14</sup>

Moreover, we are made in the image of God according to our sexuality—male or female—and not our rationality, from which our sexuality must be understood. In general, the professed desire to emphasize 'the nurturing God' is at the expense of the coming to be of what can only be subsequently nurtured.

The concern of the advocates is not to mandate these liturgies for use by everybody, but rather to establish them on an equal footing with other liturgical texts in the 1979 book. Yet what these texts say and the reasons for their saying what they say undermine all the



books of Common Prayer and even the present 1979 book, insofar as Rite II texts are claimed to be doctrinally compatible with the Prayer Book tradition. More importantly they undermine the essential doctrines of salvation because these supplements and enrichments are asserted to be equivalent not only to the received liturgical formularies of the Church but also to the doctrinal formulations of the faith. What is undermined is the primacy of certain images over others and in that lies the denial of the basic character of Revelation as Mediation. Again Fiorenza helps to make clear what is primary, what is in fact the new revelation:

The locus of divine revelation and grace is therefore not simply the Bible or the tradition of a patriarchal church but the 'church of women' in the past and in the present.<sup>15</sup>

The 'community' determines its own reality to which Scripture, and the tradition of faithful witness to Scripture, is subordinate and becomes an instrument in the project of self-realization.

If we ask 'why are these supplementary liturgical texts needed?', we are told that their use 'along with existing Prayer Book texts, will restore a more balanced range of imagery for God and will be unambiguously inclusive about the scope of the Church's people and mission'.<sup>16</sup> Thus, while they are not being mandated for use by everyone, not to use them regularly with other Prayer Book texts must, at least in the eyes of these architects and advocates, leave one unbalanced and only ambiguously inclusive. They assert that the Prayer Book use of Scripture, and by extension the whole tradition upon which it stands, is greatly deficient. Yet this claim that the scriptural images for God, especially in the classical Anglican Prayer Books, are not sufficient, well-ordered and well-balanced, must be challenged. I would hope to show that they are altogether doctrinally sound and reflect faithfully the true content of Scripture. But first I want to note that this argument of 'balancing the metaphors' really belongs to the political agenda whereby the liturgy, rather than being subordinate to and ruled by Scripture doctrinally understood, is made subject to the self-determinations of the community.

Let me illustrate from an editorial, heralding and forecasting the new decade, in which a woman priest from Toronto, Ms. Alice Medcof, asserted that:

Language limits the horizon of possibilities. What and who God is to us is reflected in how we order our lives with respect to others, society and the environment. During the last four decades, much analysis was done on this issue which rooted societal ills in the patriarchal, hierarchical nature of the Church. Calling God 'Father' exclusively, was shown to be a defect in our Christian ethos. Assuming God to be male made it natural for men to take leadership in the Church while denying this privilege to women.<sup>17</sup>

Such statements represent some of the basic assumptions of the feminist 'theological' programme. In this view language limits in the sense of being a restriction to the unbounded, unfettered will which nonetheless strives to determine its own reality. Language, consequently, no longer expresses reality but becomes the tool of those who wish to shape reality. God, accordingly is not and cannot be revealed, objectively speaking. He is what He is only 'to us'. The feminists claim that we project or create God on the basis of the experience of our lives with 'others, society, and the environment'. This means that language serves as the instrument by which the ruling elements in any given inter-personal, cultural-political milieu create their own reality, including the identity of the ultimate reality—God.

Medcof blames traditional, orthodox Christianity for our contemporary problems which are identified in the sociological terms of 'patriarchy and hierarchy.' These originally descriptive terms about the order and organization of societies become proscriptive terms, signalling for feminists structures of sin and the evil of the male. A proper account of our contemporary problems as the result of a Christian world which has altogether forgotten its essential principles, does not lie within the scope of such a programme. The feminists deny the definitive and dominant character of the theological names of God given to us through the fulness of Revelation in Jesus Christ. They claim that such names are defective. The defect apparently lies in the received 'power' structure of the institutional church, a structure of sin which has infected 'our Christian ethos' by 'calling God "father", exclusively.'

In a remarkable travesty of the Christian faith, Medcof claims that this assumes that 'God is male' because the traditional leadership of the Church has been denied to women. Thus, the power structure of the institution determines the nature of God; as that changes, so must God. The Commentary upon these Supplemental Texts collaborates with this claim, for we are told from the outset that 'change is . . . the only constant'.<sup>18</sup> No doubt there are and there will be changes, but there are different kinds of change. There is all the difference between incremental changes and ideological changes, between changes which are the result of gradual evolution and devolution in the use of language and changes which are the result of ideological promotions. The supposition that the shift in understanding whereby a word like 'stink' comes to mean simply a bad odour, rather than any kind of odour,<sup>19</sup> belongs to the same kind of change as these liturgies promote is reprehensible and sophistical.

We have here the inversion of proper order—God is made subject to the body which exists to be subject to Him as Head. The origin, order and purpose of the Church are not examined; only the issues of power and leadership are acknowledged. God can only be spoken of here to the extent that He exists for the sake of the institution and

according to its determinations. The spiritual independence and infinite self-sufficiency of God disappear in this view as quickly as the revealed doctrine of the Trinity.

Scripture, in feminist ideology, no longer has doctrinal content. It is just a grab-bag of images which may be used indiscriminately or at the political convenience of those who are 'impoverished'—in power—in the institutional church which has freed itself from the authority of Scripture doctrinally understood. There is no principle of doctrinal discrimination. Medcof exhibits the consequences of the indiscriminate use of images by confusing metaphor and name. She claims that there are other names for God such as 'God our Guide, Friend, Source of Wisdom, Holy One and Mother'. These are not all names but, at best, metaphors and attributes of divinity which modify the sacred and given names of God.

The introduction to these texts quotes the 'Committee for the Full Participation of Women in the Church' who argue for the socio-political nature of language and promote inclusive language as a way of promoting the empowerment of women in holy orders.

When women function sacramentally and administratively in roles traditionally filled by men, the inadequacies of our traditional male-dominated language become more apparent, especially to women, and the need to stretch the language to be more inclusive becomes more urgently felt.<sup>20</sup>

Thus, a political agenda really impels the demand to balance the images of theology which are denied any integrity of spiritual and intellectual content of their own. The impetus for these liturgies, moreover, provides sad testimony to the continued inability and increased unwillingness of the proponents of women's ordination to give an orthodox theological account for their position as properly consistent with the doctrines of Scripture expressed in the faithful witness of Tradition and comprehended by reason. The doctrines of the faith are present only to the extent of being subordinated to this ideological agenda which makes little pretence to standing upon the holy ground of theological doctrine. Language itself has become sexualized and politicized, but in so doing has become untheological.

Care has been taken to avoid an over-reliance on metaphors and attributes generally perceived as masculine, and to seek out and use images which describe God in feminine and other scripturally-based terms.<sup>21</sup>

In this view, all images are basically equal. There is no hierarchy or order of images. There may be a preponderance in quantity and frequency in use of what they term 'masculine metaphors', but that is explained away politically as a reflection of the patriarchal character

or bias of the time.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, a preponderance in quantity of the use of a certain type of metaphor has no real significance relative to the understanding and terms of address to God. There is no qualitative or substantial distinction between metaphors for God. All metaphors are equally inadequate. The only principle of distinction to be applied emerges from our sociological and political determinations. Yet this is quite false to the nature of Scripture as a whole and to the literary character of scriptural texts. As such this means a denial of Revelation and a disparagement of the nature of language.

How false this view is can be seen in its attempt to use images which describe God as 'feminine' in the new eucharistic prayers themselves. These prayers have no liturgical precedent but depart most significantly from traditional liturgy by their distortion of Scripture. For example, in the Second Supplemental Eucharistic Prayer, we find not only the egregious 'you graced us with freedom of heart and mind' but also the statement 'yet as a mother cared for her children, you would not forget us.' The Scriptural basis for this is Isaiah 49:15 which actually says something quite different.

Can a woman forget her sucking child,  
that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb?  
Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you.

Isaiah seeks to distinguish the limited nature of all human loves, even the most immediate, natural, and strong, such as a mother's love for her child, from the total, complete and everlasting love of God for Israel. The passage effects a contrast where the eucharistic prayer asserts a comparison, but such an assertion utterly misses the real point of the Scriptural image.

The further extent of the deliberate distortion of Scripture can be seen in the proposed form of the *Magnificat* in which all the third person singular verbs and pronouns have been changed to the second person singular! 'He has looked with favour on his lowly servant' has become 'For you, Lord, have looked with favour on your lowly servant' and so on throughout the canticle.<sup>23</sup> 'Forefathers' is replaced with 'forebears'—a word of rather uncommon and infrequent use. similar changes are made to the *Benedictus*.<sup>24</sup>

How far these liturgies want to go in the direction of feminine language is disclosed in the commentary materials. Nancy Hardesty is quoted approvingly for promoting the use of feminine pronouns for God. She writes 'to speak of the Holy Ghost as he is incorrect. We can more accurately speak of the Spirit as she or it (and so pronouns referring to the Spirit should be translated in the Scripture)'.<sup>25</sup> The basis for her claim is that the Hebrew word for Spirit is feminine and the Greek word is neuter. Yet this overlooks the definitive understanding of the Person of the Holy Spirit given to us by Jesus who speaks of Him in relation to the Father and to Himself. The Holy Spirit is the

*Paraclete*, the Counsellor, ‘Whom I shall send to you from the Father’ (John 15:26) and apart from the use of one neuter personal pronoun (*auto*), referring to the Spirit of truth (*to pneuma tēs alētheias*), Jesus consistently refers to the Holy Spirit by way of masculine singular demonstrative (*ekeinos*) and personal (*autos*) pronouns throughout the 14th, 15th and 16th chapters of St. John’s gospel. These chapters are fundamental for an understanding of the Person of the Spirit in the Holy Trinity. Because the Holy Spirit is God, the proper pronoun is correctly the common gender pronoun ‘he’ used properly to speak of the Father and the Son as well.

The Inclusive Language Liturgies offer two new canticles from the Wisdom literature, apocryphal books which emerged between the writing of the Old Testament and the New Testament and which, following the Fathers, especially Jerome, Anglicans allow to be ‘read for example of life and instruction of manners’ but not ‘to establish any doctrine’ (Art. VI). Canticles from the Wisdom literature have frequently been used in the liturgy of the church but never under the supposition that they provide proof for a feminine address to God. That Holy Wisdom is feminine in gender and that feminine pronouns have been and should be used in reference to her is altogether true, but it is no ground upon which to base feminine address to God. For these books speak of Wisdom in a variety of aspects, sometimes as created, sometimes as a divine effusion—‘a pure emanation of the Almighty’. The best we can say is that Wisdom may be understood as a divine attribute but certainly not a divine person. From the religious standpoint of the Wisdom literature that would be unthinkable. We only come to the knowledge of God as Trinity through the Incarnation. From the standpoint of the Christian Revelation, Wisdom must be taken as an attribute of the Trinity with proper relation to the Eternal Word and Son of God, Jesus Christ. Because of the ambiguity about the precise nature of Holy Wisdom, churches dedicated to Hagia Sophia have usually been understood to honour our Lady, the Blessed Virgin Mary, herself the seat of Wisdom through whom the Word of God becomes incarnate. Thus, to extrapolate from this divine feminine attribute to the Persons of the Trinity would mean, again, a distortion of the Scriptures as a whole and in the order of its parts.

What has been denied and forgotten can perhaps be seen again in what was known and remembered by those who have gone before us in the mind of Christ. On Christmas Day, 1621, the newly appointed Dean of St. Paul’s, London, the great preacher and poet John Donne delivered his first sermon there on the text: ‘He was not that light, but was sent to bear witness of the light’ (John 1:8). The sermon was at once magisterial and served as the manifesto of his ministry. His concern is to identify that light, *illa lux*, as the light of Christ in his personal and essential uniqueness as the Eternal Son of God.

Quoting Augustine *non sic dicitur lux, sicut lapis*, he notes 'Christ is not so called Light, as he is called a Rock or Cornerstone; not by a metaphor, but truly and properly.' He goes on to distinguish 'that light' from all other lights: The Apostles are said to be light, 'the light' but only by way of a limitation and a restriction, 'the light of the world'; John the Baptist was called light, *lucerna ardens*, 'a burning and a shining lampe', to denote his zeal and the communicating of light to others; the faithful are said to be light in the Lord, but this is light by reflexion, by illustration of a greater light. 'But Christ himself and he only is *Illa lux, vera lux*; that light, the true light . . . *fons lucis*, the fountain of all other light.'

That light is the *essential* and *personal* light of Christ in his divine nature, in his uniqueness as God's Son and Word. Son, Word, Light—these belong essentially and personally to Christ. They are removed and distinguished from other metaphors to become the dominant images of the reality of Jesus Christ upon which all other images predicated of Christ are ordered. Son, Word and Light belong to Christ truly and properly and they express something of the inexhaustible mystery of the uttered being of God, something of the spiritual and intellectual reality of God Himself in His own self-knowing and self-completeness.

Such an understanding on the part of Donne and Augustine derives directly from the scriptural text itself and illustrates the great importance of St. John's gospel, especially the prologue. As Donne says of his text '. . . the Gospel of St. John contains all Divinity, this chapter all the Gospel and this text all the chapter.' Such a sensibility and such an understanding has been forgotten. In one way, God has become so transcendent as to have become utterly remote and therefore our language of address is completely indifferent. In another way, God has become so completely collapsed into the world of experience that He is indistinguishable from it. Language comes to have nothing to do with God and everything to do with ourselves.

In this the inclusive language enterprise displays both a despair and a denial of Revelation. A diminished understanding of God means the diminishment of ourselves. From the consideration of the spiritual and intellectual reality of God and of ourselves as spiritual and intellectual beings, creatures whose essential character is found in the activities of knowing and willing, we are thrown back to an abstract sensuality from which all things are measured. Theology gives place to sexology. 'In the image of God he created him; male and female he created them' (Genesis 2:27) no longer means that we are in the image of God by our common rationality, which embraces and comprehends our sexual distinctions, but instead, we are in the image of God by virtue of our sexuality and God Himself has become the 'yin and yang' of our sexual psychological and socio-political perspectives and projections.

'An Educational Packet on Inclusive Language' produced by the Education Task Force Committee on Inclusive Language Liturgies of the Standing Liturgical Commission of the Episcopal Church presents the political agenda of the feminist ideology most clearly and discloses more fully the profounder assumptions underlying such a programme.

In general, the very questionable assumptions about language as essentially a tool for political and social ends, *which shapes rather than expresses reality*, and the absolute priority and centrality given to human experience rather than God, prepares the way for changes in the language of address to God. It is argued that 'our language about God is always metaphoric'; that all 'masculine terms' for God are metaphors which limit 'a fuller conception of who God is'; that the standard use of such terms is idolatry; that this may be overcome by balancing the metaphors through praying to God my Mother, by praying Psalm 136 or the Magnificat using *her* in place of *his* in reference to God, by substituting the common gender pronoun with the noun God. It is further argued that 'parts of Holy Scripture reveal the male bias of [their] time'. Indeed, on this score, the Commentary upon these Supplemental texts goes one step further to determining that parts of the gospel may not be 'a part of the gospel', 'if we believe that this reflects cultural bias'.<sup>26</sup> On this basis 'the deliberate introduction of complementary "feminine" images to our worship is desirable'. We have seen something of what this deliberate introduction really implies.

Such assertions and novel usages are, at best, highly questionable and, at worst, simply dishonest. In asserting that our language about God is always metaphoric—a false statement—they misrepresent the character of Revelation as God's word *written*. For not all scriptural language about God is metaphorical—we are not simply presented with a smorgasbord of one hundred and one scriptural metaphors from which to pick and choose and compose our own salad-bowl of divinity. Secondly, not all metaphors are of equal weight and importance. 'I am who I am' (Exodus 3:14) is not a metaphor, but the definitive revelation of God who is Living Spirit and by whom the people of Israel are consequently defined. And the form of the Revelation is at one with the substance of what is revealed. For it is out of the burning bush that God speaks; that which is of nature becomes the vehicle of that which is beyond nature. The bush is not consumed or destroyed but maintained by the very cause of its natural being, even as it serves in the Revelation of the spiritual cause of all being.

But more importantly we have the further example of the *nomina-tive language* which Jesus uses. Jesus does not speak of God metaphorically as being like a Father or of himself as being like a Son, but as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. To suggest,

moreover, that such language merely reflects the patriarchal bias of the time is to assert that the images have no content, no meaning of themselves; in short, the assertion is the renunciation of Revelation. Yet through the Incarnate Word, we know God as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. These are the sacred names and they are non-negotiable. They are not about natural superiority but about the spiritual reality of God as He has revealed Himself to us in His fulness of grace and truth. But this means to follow Jesus and attend to his words, recognizing with Peter that 'thou hast the words of eternal life' (John 6:68).

The feminists reject this even as they reject Jesus Christ both as 'the Christ, the Son of the Living God' (Matthew 16:16) and as the Son of man in the truth of his humanity, 'behold, the man' (John 19:5). The feminist hermeneutic of liberation goes beyond even the postulates of liberation theology, such as Jon Sobrino's 'access to the Christ of faith comes through our following of the historical Jesus'. Fiorenza questions that the historical Jesus can be known, but further claims that 'an actual following of Jesus is not possible' for feminists.<sup>27</sup>

The feminist liberation means liberation even from Jesus. She remarks: 'a feminist theologian must question whether the historical man Jesus of Nazareth can be a rôle model for contemporary women, since feminist psychologists point out that liberation means the struggle of women to free ourselves from all internalized male norms and models'.<sup>28</sup>

The problem with Jesus, in this view, is that he is a man. Consequently, the feminist programme denies, on the one hand, the personal and essential divinity of Jesus Christ and dismisses, on the other hand, his actual and complete humanity. Thus they renounce the blessed face of him whose sacrifice for us in the flesh of our humanity both redeems us to God and reveals God to us as Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

We are given this truth to proclaim. Revelation is about what comes from God to us in the form and manner in which it comes. The measure of our lives is the truth which we are given to proclaim and not simply our experience. As the Athanasian Creed so succinctly puts it: 'He therefore that would be saved, let him thus think of the Trinity'. For such is the inexhaustible mystery of God's own eternal and self-sufficient life, a life which has been opened out to us to be the very ground upon which we live and move and have our being. We stand upon holy ground—the holy ground of Revelation. Here is no place to kick dust in the eyes of God, for we will only blind ourselves. Father, Son and Holy Ghost are the dominant images which must order all other scriptural images and metaphors about God's activity and His relation to His people.



The claim that we must balance the metaphors because the feminine images are not represented in our liturgical and devotional life is false and dishonest. Masculine terms, as they will call them, are not exclusively used and they are certainly not used in this non-rational, sensual, sexual sense of language that possesses these contemporary wizards of illiteracy. The fact is overlooked that a great variety of Biblical metaphors for the life and activity of God and His relation to His people inform our prayers as the *modifiers* of the revealed and given terms of address to God and Father, God the Son, God the Holy Ghost, and to our Blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

For example, in the Anglican prayers of Consecration, 'tender mercy' is predicated of 'Almighty God, our heavenly Father'. 'Thy tender mercy' is, as it were, a feminine image of deep-rooted love, of compassion, the word referring to a person's inmost being, the heart or even the womb. What that compassion means is the sacrifice of Christ. But such is the tender love of God towards us, as the Palm Sunday Collect, teaches us. 'Thy tender love towards mankind' is predicated of 'Almighty and everlasting God' who 'hast sent thy Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ to take upon him our flesh and to suffer death upon the cross'. And are we not to be nurtured by Him who is the author of our being, the 'Lord of all power and might, who art the author and giver of all good things' whom we beseech to 'Graft in our hearts the love of thy Name, increase in us true religion, nourish us with all goodness, and of thy great mercy keep us in the same' (Collect for Trinity VII)? Is it not 'by the comfort of thy grace' 'that we, who for our evil deeds do worthily deserve to be punished' 'may mercifully be relieved', indeed, refreshed by the prospect of 'Jerusalem which is above', which is 'free', 'which is the mother of us all' (The Fourth Sunday in Lent)?

In conclusion, through their assumptions about the ideological and metaphorical character of language, the advocates of inclusive language deny the sacred names of God and misrepresent the language of prayer and worship. On the contrary, the sacred names of God are given by Revelation and they are not negotiable. In my view the inclusive language liturgies cannot be used by Christians because they are simply not faithful to Jesus Christ. They present as alternatives, formulas which are not doctrinally equivalent to the received liturgical formularies of the Church's life, and so cannot be used because they do not say the same thing but much less than the same thing. Thus these liturgies represent, howsoever much wittingly or unwittingly, the renunciation of Revelation, and the retreat from Chalcedon. That is to say, they retreat from the Godhead and the manhood of Jesus Christ. In short, they abandon the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ.

**DAVID CURRY**

NOTES

- 1 This paper is based on an address given to the New England Chapter of the Catholic Clerical Union, 11 January, 1990.
- 2 Commentary on Prayer Book Studies 30, containing Supplemental Liturgical Texts, Church Hymnal Corporation, New York, 1989, C-41/2.
- 3 E.S. Fiorenza, *Bread Not Stone: The Challenge of Feminist Biblical Interpretation*, Boston, Beacon Press, 1984.
- 4 Hooker, *Lewis V.* Ch. XLII.8.
- 5 Shakespeare, *Midsummer-Night's Dream*.
- 6 Hooker, *op.cit.*, V. Ch. XXIX.5.
- 7 J.H. Blunt, *The Annotated Book of Common Prayer*, 1876 p. 7.
- 8 *Supplemental Liturgical Texts*, Prayer Book Studies 30, Church Hymnal Corporation, New York, 1989, p. 60.
- 9 *Ibid.*, p. 74.
- 10 *Ibid.*, p. 74.
- 11 *Ibid.*, p. 73.
- 12 *Commentary*, C-36.
- 13 *Supplemental Liturgical Texts*, p. 70.
- 14 *Ibid.*, p. 66.
- 15 *Op.cit.*, p. XV. 6.
- 16 *Commentary*, C-42.
- 17 *The Anglican Journal*, Canada, January 1990.
- 18 *Commentary*, C-5.
- 19 *Ibid.*,C-6.
- 20 *Ibid.*,C-16.
- 21 *Ibid.*,C-16.
- 22 *Ibid.*,C-55.
- 23 *Supplemental Liturgical Texts*, p. 22.
- 24 *Ibid.*, p. 23.
- 25 *Commentary*, C-54.
- 26 *Ibid.*,C-52.
- 27 *Op.cit.*, p. 60.
- 28 *Op.cit.*, p. 60.