

[send this](#)[bookmark](#)[print](#)[close](#)

The Parish Paper

OF
ST. JOHN'S CHURCH
SAVANNAH, GEORGIA

Vol.24 No.29

The First Sunday after Trinity 1993

10/01/05

BALANCED LANGUAGE? PART IV (Reprinted from June 13, 1993)

The prejudice of feminist ideology and "primary theology", in its disregard for the authority of the Bible and its hatred for Christian history, comes into view most clearly in its abuse of the tradition. As a balanced solution to patriarchal evils we find the proposed Doxology: "Praise to the holy and undivided Trinity, one God: as it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen." There is no mention of the Father, the Son, or the Holy Spirit, nor even of a "Mother" goddess. The rationale for this we are told is that this doxology "focuses on the unity of the Triune God" and is similar to the doxology of Byzantine Vespers. But the issue really is not that this doxology focuses on unity, but that it is also "gender free". By itself this may seem innocuous. But when taken together with the theological assumptions of inclusivists the only possible response is "How dare they!" To take from the glorious tradition of the Eastern Church a doxology, which presupposes and holds Biblical revelation inviolable, and is part and parcel of the splendid theological mind of that faithful Christian heritage, and to present it as appropriate to their "primary theology" is sophistry of the first order.

That this doxology could not have arisen in the history of the Christian Church without the Trinitarian formula of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit is obvious to the casual thinker. But then it is precisely the original formula of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit that the inclusivists seek to eradicate from the mind of the Church.

This blatant contradiction becomes ever more heinous when one recognizes that the Orthodox tradition of the Byzantine Church considered the names of the Blessed Trinity, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, so far beyond the grasp of human knowing as to be properly determinative of all theological reason. In other words, all the names of God had to do ultimately with these three. (Dionysus the Areopagite in *The Divine Names* and Maximus the Confessor in his *Commentary on the Our Father* teach this very thing.) When the Orthodox say the word "Trinity", they are referring to the supereminence of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The reason the revisionists can abuse the Orthodox tradition in this way is because they are not concerned to learn from it but only to manipulate it toward their own ends.

Moreover, to claim that this doxology focuses on the divine unity is a subterfuge for the highest abstraction of feminist theology, in which

the primary metaphors of male and female modes pass into a divine androgynous unity. To think of God as an androgynous unity becomes nothing more than the abstract summation of metaphorical attributes, gleaned from the contradictory experiences of individuals. In the end, the notion of God as an abstract unity of all metaphorical attributes is nothing more than a reflection of the autonomous disposition of feminist ideology which wishes to deny all natural limitation and definition.

Ironically, for this position, the dignity of male and female, as complementary sexes of one human nature made in the image of God, is ultimately nullified, because what distinguishes man qua man is not sexual distinction (animals have these also) but the spiritual reality of knowing and loving the divine being. The abstraction of balanced language, therefore, tends tragically to self-hatred and to the denaturing of women and men. Extremely radical feminists have recognized this logical dead-end, and therefore seek to do away with any notion of transcendence whatsoever.

What this liturgy offers those who pray it is a doxology without doctrine. Its intention to revise Christianity, especially as Anglicans have understood it, is heretical. Not only does it deny the received truth of the doctrines of the Trinity and of the Incarnation, it withholds these from the very life of prayer.

The laity of our church should consider this a great scandal. We do not come to church in order to "empower" our peculiar experience and ideology. If we have any true self-knowledge, we know "there is no health in us." We come to church to make sense of our lives, to order our selves through the authority of God's commandments, to rest in the comfortable words of the Saviour, and to grow in charity. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

3) We must consider now the theology which intends to make these texts legitimate forms of worship.

When the 1979 Book Of Common Prayer was passed by the General Convention of the Episcopal Church, proponents for the new book claimed its liturgy did not modify the theology of the church. Since then we have discovered this claim was misleading. Indeed, Louis Weil has admitted as much, and has written to provide a theological foundation for the 1979 BCP ("The Gospel in Anglicanism" in *The Study of Anglicanism*).

With the current attempt at "Balanced Language", it is undeniable that we are witnessing a radical revision in theology which can be seen both in method and in principle and is clearly a departure from the Christian religion.

i) The Method. The presupposition that what inclusive language does is simply translate the thought of the gospel into terms and language which our culture can comprehend is patently false, because its method belies and contradicts it. The theological "Background" for the Supplemental Liturgical Materials claims first of all that "Change is still the only constant factor in our history" and that the "ongoing change in the English language" affects the way we pray. This presupposition

deserves a response.

That change is part of our lives is a truism. But to say that change is the "only constant factor" in human history, personal or collective, is the old reductio ad absurdum of historical relativism. It implies that we are trapped by an irreversible motion of change and subject to a fate beyond our reason and control. Given this assumption one must interpret history by virtue of his present experience, which is by definition of equal value to any other, personal or collective, now or in the past. The danger of such a position is obviously an arrogant self-preoccupied tyranny.

Moreover, this presupposition is inherently illogical. If change is "still the only constant factor", it too can change, even into stability. On the other hand, if change is itself incapable of change, it has the nature of an eternal idea, and our capacity to think about that implies we have knowledge of something permanent. The truth is; change is a factor in our history, both personal and collective, but it is neither absolutely constant, nor is it the only factor.

(to be continued)

The Rev'd. Dr. Michael L. Carreker

send this

bookmark

print

close

[Report Errors](#) | [Comments](#)

Copyright 2003 - 2004 St. John's Episcopal Church in Savannah, GA. All rights reserved.