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BALANCED LANGUAGE? PART VII (Reprinted from July 4, 1993)

"Balanced Language" therefore also subverts the freedom of redeemed humanity. It was blessed St. Augustine who understood so profoundly that the Christian faith begins with the God who speaks, and that man was created in the divine image to understand and enjoy God's word. For Augustine, man's creation in the image of God meant that the human being, before the fall, was capable of hearing the divine speech and discerning the life of spirit. The image itself is neither material nor bodily, nor is it the complementary natures of male and female so perfectly fitted to the created order. It is the peculiar capacity of man and his supremacy over the other animals to hear and enjoy the Word, to discern rational beauty and possess the Good self-consciously.

Of course, Augustine also knew that the created image was marred by sin, and that ever since it has been the labour of mankind to strive against itself, mistaken in the loves of this world. And so, when the divine charity, in the person of Jesus, made the way for man to participate forever in his Exemplar, the true nature of divine freedom was once again heard and discerned. In Christ the capacity of man's freedom was enabled to know the truth and love the Good. "If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him".

The issue of "Balanced Language" comes down to this: Was and is the mind of Jesus free? If not, he cannot be our Way to God.

If his is not the liberty of the "I Am" born of the Virgin Mary, then he would be unable to free us — his wisdom would be conjecture; his power inadequate, his charity cruel. But if the mind of Jesus is free, as he claims and as Christians have experienced and confessed for centuries, then we have known, and our forefathers have known, that God is free, and by the grace of the God-man we rejoice in the glorious liberty of the children of God.

St. Paul assures us of this freedom in a passage often misunderstood. In Galatians, Paul teaches: "For ye are all the children (literally sons) of God by faith in Christ Jesus." Christians are sons because they have put on Christ, which means that by faith in Christ, Christians enter into the spiritual relation of the Son with the Father. This is why in Christ there is neither male nor female, because these distinctions, while created and redeemed and full of dignity, are not essential to the liberty of spirit. "And because ye are sons, God hath sent the Spirit of

his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father."

At the very heart of our faith, we recognize how profound the relations of the Blessed Trinity are and why they compel our contemplation and participation. But we enter into them by grace, and we dare not presume to change their names.

There are other theological questions we cannot approach in this series, such as how the names of the Trinity may be understood to reveal the divine activity, and how we should think the unity of male and female as man. Our argument has been to show that "Balanced Language" is both in method and principle opposed to the Christian faith.

One final word. The history of the Book of Common Prayer is the glory of the Anglican tradition. Its genius is in the essential shape and recollection of the mind of Christ as we have come to know and love him as he is revealed in the Bible, and as the church Catholic has known and sought him in prayer throughout the centuries. "Balanced Language" is a monstrous parody of our heritage. It is heretical inasmuch as it denies the very principle of Christian salvation. Balanced language can be considered a moment within the history of prayer book development — but only as what common prayer cannot be.

At St. John's we continue to pray through our distinctive tradition in the 1928 Book of Common Prayer. From this we will not be dissuaded. The current process of liturgical revision in the Episcopal Church, as evidenced by "Balanced Language" cannot tolerate the Biblical and historical Christian faith. And for this reason, this ideology and political process must be firmly opposed. But the Book of Common Prayer as form and content of the whole Christian faith shall survive, no matter what becomes of the present Episcopal church. We have experienced for ourselves the spiritual substance of the common prayer tradition. It is nothing less than the work of the Spirit, and "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" both of mind and heart.

The Rev'd. Dr. Michael L. Carreker

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