

INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC REVIEW: COMMUNIO

is published in collaboration with:

INTERNATIONALE KATHOLISCHE ZEITSCHRIFT: COMMUNIO (Moselstrasse 34, D 5000 Köln 50, West Germany)—Hans Urs von Balthasar †, Hanna-Barbara Gerl-Falkovitz, Maximilian Greiner, Peter Henrici, S.J., Walter Kasper, Karl Lehmann, Reinhard Löw, Hans Maier, Otto B. Roegele.

STRUMENTO INTERNAZIONALE PER UN LAVORO TEOLOGICO: COMMUNIO (Via Castello, 10, 25121 Brescia, Italy)—Ellero Babini, Nicola Bux, Massimo Camisaca, Aldo Cazzago, Gianfranco Dalmaso, Adriano Dell'Asta, Elio Guerriero, Livio Melina, Luigi Negri, Marco Paolinelli, Ambrogio Pisoni, Antonio Sicari, O.C.D., Guido Somavilla, Benedetto Testa.

SVESCI COMMUNIO (Krcsanska Sadasnjost Publishers, Yu 41000 Zagreb, Marulicev trg 14, Yugoslavia)—Stipe Bagaric, O.P., Vjekoslav Bajsic, Jerko Fucak, O.F.M., Tomislav Ivanvic, Adalbert Rebic, Tomislav Sagi-Bunic, O.F.M. Cap., Josip Turcinovic.

REVUE CATHOLIQUE INTERNATIONALE: COMMUNIO (28, rue d'Auteuil, F 75016, Paris, France)—Jean-Robert Armogathe, Guy Bedouelle, O.P., Rémi Brague, Georges Chantraine, S.J., Jean Duchesne, Jean-luc Marion, Robert Toussaint, Jacqueline d'Ussel, S.F.X.

INTERNATIONAAL KATHOLIEK TIJDSCHRIFT: COMMUNIO (Communio Publishers, Hoogstraat 41, B 9000 Gent, Belgium)—Jan Ambaum, Georges De Schrijver, S.J., Jan Lambrecht, S.J., Jos F. Lescauwaet, M.S.C., Klara Roegiers, Stefaan Van Calster, Herman P. Vonhögen, Gerard Wilkens, S.J.

REVISTA CATÓLICA INTERNACIONAL: COMMUNIO (Ediciones Encuentro, S.A., Cedaceros, 3—2, 28014 Madrid, Spain)—Juan-Mariá Laboa, Antonio Andrés, Ricardo Blázquez, Olegario Gonzalez de Cardedal, Carlos Díaz, Javier Elzo, Félix Garcia, Patricio Herraes, Alfonso Pérez de Laborda, Francisco Lage, Fernando Manresa, José Miguel Oriol, Juan Ruiz de la Pena, Juan Martín Velasco.

MIEDZYNARODOWY PRZEGLAD TEOLOGICZNY: COMMUNIO (Pallottinum, Przybyszewskiego 30, PL 60-959 Poznan, Poland)—Lucjan Balter, S.A.C., Jan Charytansky, S.J., Kazimierz Czulak, S.A.C., Kazimierz Dynarski, S.A.C., Pawel Goralczyk, S.A.C., Stanislaw Grygiel, Helmut Juros, S.D.S., Josef Majka, Stanislaw Nagy, S.C.J., Kazimierz Romaniuk, Waclaw Swierzawski.

REVISTA INTERNACIONAL CATÓLICA DE CULTURA: COMMUNIO (Rua Benjamin Constant 23—4º Andar—CEP 20241, Caixa Postal 1362—20001 Rio de Janeiro (RJ), Brazil)—Estevão T. Bettencourt, Luciano C. Duarte, Candido Feliciano da Ponte Neto, Tarcisio M. Padilha, Heraclito F.S. Pinto, Mgr. Karl J. Romer, Newton L.B. Sucupira.

REVISTA CATÓLICA INTERNACIONAL: COMMUNIO (Erasmus Escala 1819, o bien a Casilla 13786, Santiago, Chile)—Fernando Moreno V., Germán Doig, Julio Teran Dutari, S.J., Francis Francou, S.J., Víctor Gambino C., S.D.B., Carlos Martínez F., Luiz Meyer, Sergio Muñoz L., Francisco José Piñon.

REVISTA INTERNACIONAL CATÓLICA: COMMUNIO (Av. Duque d'Avila, 26—2º, P—1000 Lisboa, Portugal)—Manuel Isidro Alves, Maria A. C. Branco, Maria Manuela Carvalho, Faustino Caldas Ferreira, Henrique de Noronha Galvão, Teresa Martinho, Mário Rui Pedras, José E. Borges de Pinho, Peter Stilwell, Luis Filipe Tomás, António Bivar Weinholtz.

AL-LIQÂ: COMMUNIO, REVUE CHRÉTIENNE INTERNATIONALE (rue Mgr Mobarak, Achrafieh, Beyrouth, Lebanon; 7, rue Coëtlogon, 75006 Paris, France)—Michel Hayek, Georges Chehata Anawati, René Habachi, Joseph Habbi.

INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC REVIEW: COMMUNIO is owned and published by *Communio* an independent, nonprofit organization located at the University of Notre Dame, P.O. Box 1046, Notre Dame, IN 46556. Executive Secretary, Karen R. Kretschmer. Telephone (219) 239-7132. **COMMUNIO** is published four times a year in April, July, October, and December. Second Class postage is paid at Ann Arbor, MI 48106. © *Communio*, 1989.

All communications regarding **articles and editorial policy** should be sent to David L. Schindler, Editor, **COMMUNIO**, P. O. Box 144, Notre Dame, IN 46556. All manuscripts should be sent in triplicate accompanied by an abstract of not more than 150 words. If the return of the manuscript is desired, a stamped, self-addressed envelope should be enclosed. Accepted manuscripts must follow the current edition of the University of Chicago Press **MANUAL OF STYLE** and should be double-spaced throughout, including footnotes and quotations. Photocopies of a good quality are acceptable. Those who have material accepted for publication in *Communio* must recognize that it is always the editor's prerogative to edit and shorten said material according to the demands of the journal.

Subscriptions and all business communications should be sent to **COMMUNIO**, University of Notre Dame, P.O. Box 1046, Notre Dame, IN 46556. Subscription rates: Yearly rates \$18.00 (individuals in U.S.), \$21.00 (individuals in other countries), \$23.00 (all institutions); for two years \$33.00 (individuals in U.S.), \$36.00 (individuals in other countries), \$41.00 (all institutions). Payment must be made in U.S. currency and drafted against an American bank.

VOLUME XVI, NUMBER 1

USPS 051830

POSTMASTER;

Send address changes to:

COMMUNIO

SPRING 1989

ISSN 0094-2065

1989

Vol 1

- Editor:* David L. Schindler
Executive Secretary: Karen R. Kretschmer
Editorial Board: Val J. Peter, Chairman, Andrée Emery, Clifford G. Kossel, S.J., Thomas Langan, Richard Malone, Mary Rousseau, John Seward, David L. Schindler, Kenneth L. Schmitz, John R. Sheets, S.J., John H. Wright, S.J.
Consulting Editors: Brian Benestad, University of Scranton
 Stratford Caldecott, London, England
 Jude P. Dougherty, Catholic University of America
 Louis Dupré, Yale University
 Denis Farkasfalvy, O. Cist., Cistercian Abbey, Irving, TX
 Roch Kereszty, O. Cist., University of Dallas
 Mícheál Ledwith, Maynooth, Ireland
 Stephen Maddux, University of Dallas
 Aidan Nichols, O.P., Cambridge University, England
 Glenn W. Olsen, University of Utah
 Carl J. Peter, Catholic University of America
 Robert F. Slesinski, St. Nicholas Byzantine Catholic Church, New York
 Michael Waldstein, University of Notre Dame

- Francesco Bertoldi* 6 **The religious sense in Henri de Lubac**
Ysabel de Andia 32 **Purity of heart**
Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger 54 **"You are full of grace": Elements of biblical devotion
 Mary**
Kenneth L. Schmitz 69 **From anarchy to principles**
Antonio Sicari 89 **Teresa of Avila: Mystical experience in defense of
 dogma**
Claudia Lee 105 **The role of mysticism within the Church as conceived
 by Hans Urs von Balthasar**
- RETRIEVING THE TRADITION**
- Emile Mersch* 127 **Religion, Christianity, Catholicism**
- NOTES AND COMMENTS**
- Suzanne Scorsone* 139 **In the image of God: Male, female
 and the language of the liturgy**
Kenneth M. Batinovich 152 **On the death of Father Balthasar**

Notes and Comments

IN THE IMAGE OF GOD: MALE, FEMALE, AND THE LANGUAGE OF THE LITURGY

There are those who feel that the only way to ensure that women are treated at long last as men's equals is to banish any male-evocative words from the liturgy—and from the rest of religious and secular culture. The argument of this small contribution to a large debate is that the conflict is unnecessary to the equality of women, that it is probably counter-productive, and that the best way to assure the equality we all want is to recognize the gender-inclusive and the feminine, rather than to censor out the masculine. We can then turn our attention back to the two great commandments, to the one thing necessary, free of at least this distraction.

It may be useful to examine some of the points of departure from which I, as one Catholic woman among a like-minded many, have come to this perspective.

1. The English language has always, from the earliest days of which we have any written record, used the word "man" in two senses. Always

there have been the generic (equivalent to the Latin *homo*) and the male gender-specific (equivalent to *vir*).

So much by way of pseudoetymology and claims from history based on little or no research has been scattered across the liturgical language debate that I must ask your patience while I do some documentation of at least an illustrative sort. Those who find the English language breathlessly intriguing, as I do, may even enjoy it.

For Old English, Anglo-Saxon, that craggy and evocative, stirring language, a few examples should suffice. I use a number of such examples because it is here that the language begins at its most primitive. If "man" had sexist roots, they should appear here, but they do not. Ælfric's *Grammar*, an ancient dictionary, puts it precisely: "ægðer is man ge wer ge wif" (either is man ye male person or ye female person).¹ L. K. Shook, in fact, would translate Ælfric's definition as meaning "Both *wer* (= Latin *vir*) and *wif* are covered by *man*."² *Wif*, incidentally, did not mean some sort of subordinate identity derivative from the man to whom she was married (the ideological underpinning of the neologism "Ms"). A *wif* was the gender-specific term for a woman of any age, married or unmarried.³ A girl

¹Joseph Bosworth and T. Northcote Toller. *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary* (London: Oxford University Press, 1898), p. 668.

²Personal communication.

³Bosworth and Toller, *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, p. 1217.

was a *wifchild*⁴ and a widow remained a *wif*⁵. A female friend to man or woman was a *wif-freond*.⁶ Being a man's *wif* was more like the converse of what we would mean by saying a male was "her man."

The very words "woman" and "women" in contemporary English are derived from *wif-man* and *wif-men*. Over time the word was simplified by dropping the "f"; to this day the spoken, pronounced form of the plural (wimen), as distinct from its spelling, retains this original Anglo-Saxon form. The word means "female man," i.e., "female person," translated by Bosworth as "foemina homo."⁷ Thus our very term designating women, including the women's movement itself, has its genesis in the generic meaning of the word "man."

The Anglo-Saxons, however, took this even-handed understanding of *man* or *mann* beyond Ælfric's technical definitions to applied usage. *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* for 640 A.D. speaks of "Aorcengota, hali-femne and wundorlic man." (Aorchengota, a holy virgin and a wonderful man [person]).⁸ Ælfric's (another Æl-

fric) *Lives of Saints* places in the mouth of the soon-martyred St. Agatha the words "Eala ðu min drihten, ðe me to menn gesceope . . ." (Oh thou, my Lord, you who shaped me a man).⁹ One does doubt she is claiming that she is not guilty of the capital charge of consecrated virginity on grounds that she is really a male in disguise.

The earliest use of "man" as an inclusive term having been established, let us trace that same usage forward in time.

The court of King James I of England and IV of Scotland considered it altogether unexceptionable that the new English translation of the Bible should declare that "God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them."¹⁰ This was normal usage in the court of a king who was the heir of two highly educated sovereign queens, one his mother, Mary Queen of Scots. The other was the relative who provided for his upbringing and from whom he inherited his English throne, Elizabeth I, one of the most powerful monarchs in the world of that day.

So too with more modern English. In 1863, when Abraham Lincoln spoke at Gettysburg of "a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men

⁴Rev. Joseph Bosworth, *A Compendious Anglo-Saxon and English Dictionary* (London: Gibbons & Co., Ltd., 1901), p. 252.

⁵Bosworth and Toller, *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, p. 1218.

⁶T. Northcote Toller, *Supplement to An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary* by J. Bosworth (London: Oxford University Press, 1921), p. 745.

⁷Rev. J. Bosworth, *A Compendious Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*.

⁸Dorothy Whitelock et al, trans., *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (Brunswick,

New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1961), p. 19, and Joseph Bosworth, *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*

⁹Walter W. Skeat, trans. and ed., *Ælfric's Lives of Saints* (London: Oxford University Press, 1881), p. 206-7, and L. K. Shook, personal communication.

¹⁰Genesis 1:27.

are created equal,"¹¹ it never occurred to any of his hearers that his policy implied the abolition of the slavery only of males. And in 1936, G. K. Chesterton said of Alice Meynell that "since she was so emphatically a craftsman, she was emphatically an artist and not an aesthete. . . ."¹² Chesterton is clearly speaking of a woman, using "craftsman" in the unselfconsciously inclusive sense. His distance from sexism in this usage is understood from the company in which his reminiscences place her—Hilaire Belloc, William Butler Yeats, and George Bernard Shaw, among others. Chesterton was not cramped by the ideology of pronouns; he was simply using his vivid and precise command of the language to say something wonderful about someone he thought of as "a message from the sun."

For that matter, when Canadian children sing "Oh Canada," designated as the national anthem as recently as 1980, the girls are not bracketing themselves out as born subversives every time the words "true patriot love in all thy sons command" pass through their earnest, straight-standing selves.

Inclusive usage is not confined to the high-falutin' literary. Two entirely non-ideologized girls from the South Bronx or Brooklyn and the

surrounding area may express anything from greeting, through surprise or admiration, to warning or anger by different inflections of "Hey, man!"¹³

None of this is to deny that women have suffered from discrimination and disability. It would take an entirely different, and far longer, piece of work to document the extent, and the limits, of those disabilities. The rights and activity of women have varied by era, by class, by region and even by individual personality.

Nor is it to deny that, once a woman has absorbed the notion that "man" is solely exclusive, hearing it used in Scripture and liturgy can become hurtful and alienating. I recall, indeed, the day my (female) eighth grade English teacher told the class that "he" was the pronoun to use when one did not know the gender of the individual. When the explanation given was that it was considered better to be male, and the choice of "he" gave the unknown individual the benefit of the doubt, I was the first, as it happens, among several in my all-girl class to say that it was unfair. We knew we were as good as boys—better, in our opinion. She meant to indicate usage, but her explanation took the form of a mistaken moral and philosophical position. Unwittingly mixing levels here, as it so often does, led us down the garden path. If many teachers of that era taught the indefinite pronoun that way, perhaps taking it out of some cloned teaching manual scattered across the continent, it is no wonder many of

¹¹Abraham Lincoln, "Gettysburg Address," 1863, in John Bartlett, *Bartlett's Familiar Quotations*, 13th ed. (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1955), p. 540.

¹²G.K. Chesterton, *Autobiography* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1986), pp. 286-7.

¹³Personal observation.

those girls, now women, are angry. The fact is, however, that the teacher, who in other respects had many virtues, did not understand this aspect of the language clearly. She is not alone; feminist neologizers construe "he" as she did. And a great deal of sloganeering, real pain, and literary contortion has turned on that truncated and incorrect understanding of the language.

One might note, too, that this is more a North American problem than a pan-English problem. In British English, one can use "one" when one wants to keep one's own or anyone else's gender indefinite. Having dropped "one" as too formal or too arch, North Americans are left to choose their indefinite pronoun from among "you" (too colloquial and aggressively personal for literary use, even for North Americans) and "he"—now expanded to "he and she," "he/she," or leapfrogging the two by paragraph. The irony of dropping the formal but non-sexist English usage, then, is that it has resulted in the creation of a vacuum filled only by the usage which, while essentially non-sexist, can be interpreted in sexist ways, or by a self-conscious, stilted neo-formalism.

This essay, however, confines itself to saying that, during a social history both of women's disability and of women's strength, the speakers of English have always recognized both inclusive and gender-specific uses of the word "man." Such disabilities as there have been arise from other causes. Were the word "man" to be decisive for the perception of women, then Latin, which makes a clear distinction between *homo*, the inclusive, and *vir* and *mulier*, the specific, should have

been the language of a fully egalitarian society. Yet women in Roman society had fewer rights and were far more under the authority of father and husband than was ever the case for English-speakers at any point in their history. No English-speaker has ever had the unlimited authority over property and person, even to the point of capital punishment, possessed by the early Roman husband who held his wife in *manus* and his male and female children under *patria potestas*.

Both languages had a generic form (*homo*, *man*) as well as a gender-specific form, yet the society in which the generic overlapped the gender specific was arguably the less sexist. Important as language is for perception, therefore, it cannot be a simple one-for-one determinant of behavior. Sexism exists, but truncating the language, particularly when it actually bears non-sexist, inclusive meaning, seems a futile exercise in shooting the messenger.

This double use of "man" is not a source of confusion: it rather carries important nuances of meaning which cannot be conveyed by any alternative phrasings. English is a highly contextually-construed language, the sense of many words being identified by reference to surrounding structures and content. Obvious examples are the discrimination of present or past tense in the word "read," or even, in spoken colloquial English, of whether one is referring to a riverine plant, part of a woodwind, or a literary experience when speaking of "a good read/reed." It is therefore a simple and entirely familiar mental operation for the speaker of English, from the most literary to the most colloquial, to sort

the generic from the gender-specific uses of "man." The generic sense of "man," moreover, carries its own connotations of emphasis on the individual person representing the whole (a form of synecdoche). It is only very imperfectly replaced by such alternatives as "person" (Greek-derived, with its legal and role implications) or "human" (Latin-derived, with the implied taxonomic distinction from animal, alien or even angelic species).

The identification of the word "man" as solely a male designator and hence as discriminatory is an artifact of the past two or, at most, three decades. This identification is a political/ideological construct, a straw man (gender-specific) set up largely so it can be knocked down. It has no real basis in the millenium and a half of development of the English language. A far more effective, because accurate, feminist understanding of the language would emphasize the always-existing inclusion of woman in the word "man," rather than promoting a bowdlerization of the language to find other, less suitable (or euphonious) words or constructs to include the woman who had never been excluded in the first place.

Many women, feminist women, and I among them, refuse to allow other feminists to exclude us from the word "man," to which we have as much right as do men. We will not be excluded from all the English literature of the past fifteen hundred years, nor do we want a misdirected political agenda, however well-meaning, to create in us a false sense of consciousness-raised (or razed) "rage" every time we read the word "man" used in the generic sense.

We love the English language and its literature too much, we understand it too well, and we have enough else to deal with in life without this unnecessary aggravation. Much that comes to me from other Catholic women indicates that this is not a minority view.

What is being called "inclusive language" is not truly inclusive; it is rather a highly exclusive construct which cuts away meaning-bearing words and the vitality of both masculine and feminine images. It excludes anything which is not neutral, or perhaps neutered. It thereby impoverishes the language. It also impoverishes our culture, as the vast majority of our works of literature are falsely dismissed as "male chauvinist"—and our Scripture and liturgical texts with them. The multivalent word "man" is being destroyed as a unifier as males and females are increasingly being viewed as different—and mutually antagonistic—species. This is the final irony of an ideology of word use which was in theory intended to unify male and female by language, but sought in praxis to do it by a methodology of conflict and rejection.

2. Scripture is the Word of God. However much we may learn about the interpretation of this or that aspect of it, we cannot tamper with its wording beyond arranging translations (always inexact) in ways which make it maximally comprehensible. The "wisdom" of one age, or of one class, or of one culture—all operative in the secular and Church manifestations of the women's movement—has something valid to contribute, but it may not see or know something that appears quite obvious to another age, class or cul-

ture. To package interpretation as translation (which is what changing Scriptural wording would be) is to limit the Word of God to only one possible manifestation of its richness. Some interpretation is inevitable in the business of translation, but systematic shifts of wording which is clear in the original (from "Father" to "Creator," from "he" to "he and she," from "Father" to "Mother" or even "Father/Mother") are going beyond the inevitable to the inadmissible. This is true not only of the Liturgy of the Word itself, but of all those sections in the many liturgies of the Church which are quotes, paraphrases or allusions to Scripture.

3. Those changes which can be made should be such as would be unnoticeable. They should simply be a constructive part of the liturgy in what it is doing. One example of such a change would be the shift from "for all men" to "for all"—unnecessary but unobtrusive.

Many of the "inclusive" changes suggested in recent years are so obvious, and stick out like such verbal sore thumbs, that the ideological point being made takes precedence in the hearers' minds over the actual content of the liturgical or Scriptural phrase itself. We can pass over the merely silly, like one Bishops' conference committee document on labor that placed "fisher-people" among a list of occupations.¹⁴ I think here rather of hymns addressed to

"faithful Parent," or transmogrifications like baptism "in the Name of the Creator, the Sanctifier and the Vivifier." Something like that last, ironically, could undo the ecumenical work of decades by throwing the mutual recognition of baptism by the various Christian churches into doubt, an illustration of the principle that any single idea, even a good one, pursued to its extreme, will become counterproductive by its interference with other good things.

In liturgy, the ideology of language should not distort or replace the interpenetrating acts and ideas, the interaction between God and Man, are what the liturgy is and without which it has no point. I would not have us ending our prayers with "we ask you this, O Parent, in solidarity with Jesus our Sibling, in the androgynous power of the Holy Spirit."

4. Related to this is the principle that all liturgical language should be aesthetically suitable to, and expressive of, the reality being transmitted. Most of the time that means that the words should be so crafted as to be beautiful, evocative, and a means of leading the hearer beyond himself (generic) to God and to the service of His children. Much political/ideological jargon (and it matters not in what field) is far from euphonious or transcendent; it sounds more like a machinery instruction manual or like political sloganeering. It speaks to its own initiates but not to the general mass of people. (That liturgical pun—based on two highly diverse, contextually distinguished meanings of homonyms—is entirely deliberate. Just so is English rich with puns.)

The Catholic liturgy is for everyone, and should speak to everyone

¹⁴Episcopal Commission for Social Affairs, Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, "Free Trade: At What Cost? A Message on the Occasion of the Feast of St. Joseph the Worker," May 1987: 2.

well. The English translation of the liturgy has been so bereft of image and vivid language (which still exist untranslated in the Latin) as it is that it seems a pity to threaten it with yet another form of banality.

5. Changes made to the liturgy should not alter the theology of the liturgy. To use just one example, the word "Father" is, indeed, gender-specific. Yet to replace it with "Creator" would be to remove the "Father-child" relationship and replace it with something more impersonal. "Creator" is certainly true, but "Father" is also true and our vision is obscured without it. "Parent" is a role designation but not a personal name, so it will not do either. In English we have only an impersonal use of the neuter, so God cannot be "It." "He" is short of the whole truth, but so is "She," and taking turns between them would be glaringly artificial.

God is not only beyond gender himself; he invented it for creatures at a certain level of structural complexity who needed to reproduce. Once he had, by evolution and/or other means, created human beings (here the term is appropriate), he made gender into a union of difference which could mirror, if distantly, his own trinitarian unity in love and creativity. He is not just beyond gender; he is prior to it.

There are those who argue that there is reason for identifying the first person of the Trinity with fatherhood, which is masculine. Insofar as this is so, then that reason has to do with certain things that we see as the highest in fatherhood, rather than with maleness as such. What is being evoked has to do with strength, with authoritativeness, with unwavering protectiveness, with faithful

cleaving to both mother and children, with justice gentled by mercy, with wisdom and understanding. These attributes are associated (although of course *not* exclusively) with human fathers at their best; human fathers are in fact male.

This is, however, a large world within a large universe, and we have to see clearly that none of these things is predicated upon biological maleness in itself. God did not create males and then add females as an afterthought to help out. (Nor did he create Adam, look at what he had made, and say "Hmm—not bad for a rough draft, but I can do better.") Let us prescind for a moment from the fact that our high concept of fatherhood is better fulfilled by some human fathers than by others. Gender is, as we have mentioned, something we share with a mind-boggling number of other complex organisms. Among mammals, all mothers nurture by taxonomic and functional definition, but "fatherliness" is far less universal. Wolf fathers and gibbon fathers do bond to their mates for life and do nurture their offspring. Male chimpanzees couple promiscuously in a troop and will play with, teach and protect any infant in the group (allowing for individual personality variation). Male African lions will support females in nurturing their own offspring, but will kill the cubs of defeated males while taking over a pride of females. Female polar bears give birth alone, nurture and protect alone, and drive off any nearby males, genetic father or not, knowing that males are inclined to kill any cubs they find. Among non-mammals, the picture is still more diverse. Some male birds nurture their own young; others do not.

Among many (not all) reptiles, such as turtles, or among amphibians such as frogs and most fish, neither mother nor father nurtures the young; they are left to hatch and fend for themselves. All possible permutations seem to exist, including a nurturant male seahorse, in whose body the female deposits her eggs.

Our image of the fatherhood of God—indeed our images of both fatherhood and motherhood—are therefore not inherently derived from biological maleness or femaleness as such (let male chauvinists and militant feminists both take note). Fatherhood and motherhood as concepts are an understanding of roles carried by males and females among *Homo sapiens*. God created this species to be like other species in most things but unique in that it bears his image. Yet we have to bear that image in the terms of the incarnational reality that we are. Thus we use our own most powerful terms of relationship, those of family, of fatherhood, of motherhood, of the union of Father and Son, of the love of God the Father toward us his children, and of our love in return.

That does not make God male. Nor does it make woman any the less God's image; all the faithful love, wisdom, protectiveness and strength we associate with motherhood also originate in God. The attributes we associate with the masculine and with the feminine must both be equally derived from God, since "God created man in his own image . . . male and female he created them."¹⁵ We are evoking attributes

and relationships which are in fact beyond and independent of biological gender.

In another sentient species the image might be expressed differently. Yet we have to perceive God's image in terms of what we actually are as he has created us. He has taken that physical and spiritual reality and made it into an image of himself. So we call God Father and human fathers happen to be male. That is not an exaltation of maleness; it is simply a statement about the fatherhood of God.

Perhaps truth is found, not in the neutering of language, but in the full, vital recognition of both the feminine and the masculine, which subsist in all of us in varying proportion. Perhaps the truth is most nearly touched by a rejoicing in the feminine and the masculine rather than a rejection of them.

All icons are less than the reality, and words are no better than pictures. Our age and culture may have too literal and linear a faith in words, without seeing them as image and icon—no more, though no less. Both word and picture are attempts at portraying a revelation which is perceived by grace but which precedes and is not simply reducible either to word or to icon.¹⁶ Liturgical words are not the tedious but analytical and narrowly defined terms of a monograph in particle physics. The realities they convey are not so manipulable. Liturgical words are the

¹⁶Cf. Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, "Cardinal Frings' Speeches During the Second Vatican Council," in *Communio*, vol. 15, no. 1 (Spring 1988): 137.

¹⁵Genesis 1:27.

poetic terms of a metaphysics which struggles to be as precise as it can about a vast, revealed reality which it can do no more than evoke—that it may invoke.

6. Relatively few women feel excluded by the word "man." I myself did not learn that I was supposed to feel excluded from the words of Scripture, liturgy and hymns until I was well into my twenties. From childhood I quite naturally applied all the generic senses of the word "man" to myself and to all men (generic) with no difficulty at any age in distinguishing them from the gender-specific uses of the word. That "God saved man" meant me, as did the fact that "God made man in his own image." I have heard from many other women, from all points on the political spectrum on other issues, who say that the word "man" and so-called inclusive language are a non-issue for them. As one woman, a volunteer for an international development organization in the Canadian Church and no right-winger, put it to me: "'Man' is an image. Language has to use images. We call the Holy Spirit a dove, but nobody thinks he's a bird. We just use images because we have to, but we know that's what they are."

There are, in fact, large numbers of women who are exasperated with the bickering about inclusive language. Let those who doubt this go (to listen, not to lecture) among any grassroots gathering of women, Catholic or Protestant. When I am asked to a parish to speak, I make a point of raising issues other than my topic with those who sit near me over lunch and then of sitting back and listening. Let those who want to

hear the grassroots go, not to feminist conferences, but to the neighborhood fabric store, as I did while writing this article. One woman, having seen me scrawling away at a coffee shop a few minutes before, asked what I had been doing. Upon hearing, the eyes of all half-dozen women about the counter—educated, community active mothers of children, single women and one grandmother—lit up with recognition. A very heated conversation ensued. "It's so silly," said the older woman. "I have always seen 'man' as meaning all of us, men and women." "Next they are going to be wanting to change the Lord's Prayer," said a mother of three young children, member of her local United Christian Church Education Committee. She was, of course, quite right. These women are strongly in favor of equal rights, equal education, equal opportunity, and all those things that feminism originally represented; none of them sees this more radical feminist extreme as representing them as women or as in any way essential to those central issues of equality. They are not alone.

If we are to be a Church which consults broadly and accurately with the people as a whole, rather than with small sub-segments of an elite with special interests, we should ensure that liturgical writers staffing episcopal conferences or publishing houses, with their small numbers and disproportionately huge distributional impact, are not pressured into taking positions which do not represent the feelings of the majority of women. If the bishops were to do a valid, large, random-sample poll of Catholic women, they would find

that the neutering of language was desired by relatively few.

Our own poll findings in this archdiocese show that Catholics, and especially women, want two things more than anything else from the Church: contact with God in the sacraments, and Christian education and formation for their children. Inclusive language was seldom even raised by respondents.¹⁷ Even in these years of reduced church attendance, Catholics attend more often than Protestants and women attend Mass more frequently than do men (83 percent compared to 68 percent, regularly or occasionally). In other respects, too, women are far more active in the Church, on average. Even the drop in Mass attendance over recent years is less pronounced among women than among men.¹⁸ One should also note, that it takes the form of reduced frequency, rather than of outright lapse or leaving the Church. So any notion that women are leaving in droves over the use of pronouns simply does not reflect observable reality.

Some indication of what a poll of Catholics on the specific issue of language might find is given by a Decima Research poll done for the *United Church Observer* in March of 1988.¹⁹ The United Church is the

¹⁷Archdiocese of Toronto, Sharelife, unpublished report, "Awareness and Donation Support Study," Gallup Poll, released June 1985.

¹⁸D. Grelet & Decima Research, *Lay Catholics and the Church*, unpublished report, Archdiocese of Toronto, released 10 May 1988.

¹⁹David Allan, *United Church Observer*, personal communication, refer-

ring to United Church Observer Decima Survey and derived article, July 1988.

quintessential embodiment of liberal Protestantism in Canada. Women have been ordained to its ministry since 1936, and its national staff has a very active interest in women's issues. One would expect, therefore, that "inclusive language" would draw the greatest support among any church population from *United Church Observer* readers, who tend to be the more active and committed members of their Church.

To lend added weight to this expectation, the question, as asked, was somewhat loaded toward the interpretation of the traditional language as exclusive rather than inherently inclusive. Readers were asked whether they would prefer that the language of Scripture, church services and business meetings "continue to be male-oriented" or contain "both male and female images." Yet the responding population favored the continuation of "male-oriented" language 63.4 percent to 36.4 percent! There was no statistically significant difference between male and female respondents; the small spread there was showed women more in favor of the traditional language (65.0 percent) than were men (59.4 percent). Even education showed no significant difference. Those under 40 did show a significant difference, but even they responded 56.3 percent to 42.5 percent in favor of "male-oriented language."

One would suspect that, had the question been phrased in such a way as to include the possibility of the egalitarian definition of language,

the response would have been even more overwhelmingly in favor of the traditional usage. I would interpret these figures, not as revealing a woe-ful, intractable sexism in the pews and among the women of the United Church, but as demonstrating a clear comprehension of the egalitarian, inclusive meanings of the words at issue. If this is the status of the question among members of the United Church of Canada, it is only reasonable to expect that a similar survey of Catholics would show an even stronger preference for the use of traditional language.

I wonder whether the grassroots women of the churches do not have a stronger sense of their own dignity and equality as women than do the few in rarified, elite factional networks who have taken prominence upon themselves as our unelected, unrepresentative spokesmen.

7. Catholic doctrine, as such, is silent on the precise social relationship of male and female. A socio-economically role-equivalent approach is possible. So is a more gender-separated, complementary interpretation of roles. How it is viewed may vary from culture to culture, class to class, age to age.

It would be most unfortunate if the bishops, or those writing translations of liturgies, were to take up one allowable position on male-female roles and, by enshrining it in the central Catholic interaction of the liturgy, impose it on all those Catholics who hold a different, but entirely legitimate view. The roles of male and female, and with them the relationship of masculine and feminine, are largely a lay matter, and the laity have by no means reached a consensus on it. Nor, perhaps,

need they. Perhaps this is one of those areas in which a plurality of views engenders freedom and vigor within the Church. If people can be Catholic and hold various views, they should be allowed to do so. "*In essentiis, unitas; in dubiis, libertas; in omnibus, caritas.*"

The liturgy should not become an ideological Procrustean bed used by one faction to silence all other views. It is the Church's worship of God—not a political tool. If people of one view can convince others in the Church of the merit of their position, more power to them. Liturgy used as a weapon, however, would not only be grossly unfair in implying that God himself gave one side the big battalions; it would also be a deflection of the liturgy from its real purpose, which is direct contact with God. Sexual politics, rather than prayer, would become the reality of the action. People should be allowed by the liturgy to pray in their own way, and with their own approach, letting the ideological positions stand or fall on their own merits—separately.

This is what we will do if we truly believe in legitimate and authentic freedom and plurality within the unity of the Church.

Conclusion

In this era we need peace among Christians if we are to work together for peace in the world at large. Perhaps every era has the same need, but this is especially our own. The point that the full equality of women with men must be recognized in word and action has been made and has been generally accepted, although bringing it consistently down

tion

f

eived

to the ground of everyday relationships has some way yet to go. We will not, however, succeed in bringing peace between men and women if we proceed on a class conflict model, trying to strike down the masculine at every turn, obliterating all that is not feminine or neuter. We will succeed far better and far more quickly if we love one another, which is probably what the Lord would prefer in any case.

One might see and apply, therefore, certain general principles to bring peace, equality and mutual acceptance to men and women in our liturgical language. Underlying these principles is Occam's Razor, the philosophical principle that whatever is the most simple and direct, and the least unnecessarily multiplied and complex, is that which is most likely to be closest to the truth.

A. We can recognize and make abundantly explicit in our teaching at all levels that the word "man" and the pronouns "he," "him," and "his," along with occasional and related others like "son," do, in certain contexts, mean both males and females. It is, if you will, authentically feminist to affirm that the word "man" belongs to women as much as to men—and let us rely on the proven linguistic intelligence of people to tell the humans from the males as they have always done.

B. Our liturgists can be put to work, not in expunging masculine imagery from Scripture and liturgical language, but in identifying and making better use of feminine imagery. Scripture compares God to a mother—to one who, though a mother should forget her child, will never forsake us, and to the woman

who seeks for the lost coin until she finds it. The *Ruah*, the Spirit-breath of God, is largely a feminine image. So is Holy Wisdom, which Pope John Paul II, following tradition, applies both to Mary and to Christ.²⁰ Christ himself wished to gather all Jerusalem, and with it all the world, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings—but we would not.²¹

If Christ would gather us rather than have us bicker and negate among ourselves, then let us allow ourselves to be gathered, opening ourselves—and our language—to one another. Our difference is created, not for conflict, but for synergy. Male and female are not meant to be joined in a struggle for power, acting out some ideological model of class conflict rooted in biology. Our biology is meant, rather, to be rejoiced in, to be a unifier and to be transcended both in this world and the next. Class conflict between the sexes, therefore, is fundamentally foreign to the Christian vision. Interwoven as our relationships and our biological gender identity are, it is the relationships that will live in eternity. "In the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like the angels in heaven."²² Or again, as real and as much an element of ourselves as our gender identity is, it is not meant to cause division between us. "There neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neith

²⁰Pope John Paul II, Homily on Feast of Our Lady of Sorrows, Davenport, Ontario, 15 September 1984.

²¹Luke 13:34.

²²Matthew 22:30.

male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus."²³

Through the centuries people have found it difficult to maintain the fullness of balance in perceiving Christ as true God and true man. Perhaps we have a parallel difficulty in perceiving both the full, earthly, biological reality and the transcendent reality of our own human selves. So in one era we tend to absolutize the spiritual; in another, such as our own, we seem to absolutize the biological. Yet the balance is the fullness of both. We are male and female, but we are meant to be united in the concrete reality of that difference, a difference which we are ultimately intended to transcend. Our vision is one of complementarity and unity, not of conflict.

Medieval Christians were nearer the mark when they used the poetic model, not of conflict, but of all creation in harmony, moving in solemn and joyful dance to the music of the spheres. Nor is this merely an obsolete, archaic image; the sciences themselves have shifted from perceiving chaos to perceiving an overarching order and unity at all levels, from the vast to the infinitesimal. The name of God is again being spoken by some among the astrophysicists.²⁴ Our biological and spiritual beings are part of and transcend the larger cosmic unity of his universe.

²³Galatians 3:28.

²⁴e.g., Stephen W. Hawking, *A Brief History of Time: From the Big Bang to Black Holes* (Toronto: Bantam Books, 1988), pp. 173-5.

T. S. Eliot, the consummate image-painter in modern English, touched the poetry of it.

... The association of man
and woman
in daunsinge, signifying
matrimonie—
A dignified and commodious
sacrament.
Two and two, necessarye
coniunction,
Holding eche other by the hand or
the arm
Whiche betokeneth concorde.
Round and round the fire. . .
Rustically solemn or in rustic
laughter . . .
Earth feet, loam feet, lifted in
country mirth
Mirth of those long since under
earth
Nourishing the corn.²⁵

Liturgy is act and word, immanence and transcendence, the physical and the spiritual, rational thought and evocative poetry, movement and music. It is the at once immanent and transcendent invitation of God who is the great Unifier. So we, biological and spiritual beings, male and female, are invited to tread handfast the measures of the Great Dance, in the image of the ineffable God. □

Suzanne Scorsone

²⁵T. S. Eliot, "East Coker" of "Four Quartets" in T. S. Eliot, *The Complete Plays and Poems of T. S. Eliot* (London: Faber & Faber, 1969), pp. 177-8.