

**Permitted changes
to the text of
the Scottish Liturgy 1982**

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God, the Persons of the Holy Trinity, and gender in the English language

Genesis tells us that humankind (*adam*) was created 'in the image of God', and that God created humankind 'male and female' (Gen. 1. 27). The implication is that God's image encompasses both male and female.

In Hebrew, all nouns have grammatical gender (masculine or feminine), which does not correspond to biological gender. Greek grammar includes a third category of gender, neuter, which similarly does not correlate with biological gender. In modern English, grammatical gender is largely reduced to pronouns, and largely conforms to biological sex or lack thereof, except in figurative language. Nevertheless words that conveyed no connotations of biological gender at earlier stages in the development of English have come to do so in modern English, 'man' being the archetypal example. Assumptions based on contemporary English usage can therefore be misleading, if permitted to define appropriation of concepts developed in other languages and cultures. The use of gendered pronouns in English in relation to the Triune God (rather than the individual persons of the Holy Trinity), or to the Holy Spirit, can therefore be misleading in contemporary usage, implying a biological sex-identity.

For example, the Hebrew word for Spirit, *ruach*, is grammatically feminine, while the Greek *pneuma* is neuter, and Greek *paraklētos* (paraclete) is masculine. This implies neither that the ancient Hebrews regarded the Spirit of God as female, nor that Greek-speaking Jews and Christians perceived the Spirit as an inanimate object, or the Paraclete as male. Nor was there any assumption either that a manifestation or emanation of the, implicitly male, creator god must share that masculinity, or that the partner in the creative work of God must have been female, even where figurative language is resonant with sexual imagery.

In the light of these considerations, recent liturgical writing, and theological discourse generally, have sought to avoid gender-specific references to God wherever possible. There are, in fact, few if any contexts where the imagery and scriptural allusions demand masculine or feminine forms in relation to the Holy Spirit. The use of neuter pronouns inevitably sounds harsh and crude, and conveys to modern anglophone congregations connotations of inanimacy. It may be that the English language is in flux, and that new conventions to address these issues may take shape in the future. Meanwhile creative and imaginative ways are being found to

express what needs to be said without irritating repetition caused by the avoidance of pronouns.

Bearing all this in mind, the Faith & Order Board instructed the Liturgy Committee to re-visit the permitted changes to the text of the *Scottish Liturgy 1982* authorised by the bishops in January 2010. The document of 2010 was not comprehensive in its coverage of gendered language in relation to God. Most notably, the masculine pronoun is used in relation to the Holy Spirit on several occasions. In one or two other places, what we hope are some more satisfactory options have been provided. Many of the changes offered have been adopted from the document, *Praying Together* (published by the English Language Liturgical Consultation in 1988), an ecumenical document that was the result of wide-ranging scholarly consideration of the common texts used by the churches in their Eucharistic liturgies.¹

¹ On line at <http://englishtexts.org/Portals/11/Assets/praying.pdf> (accessed 17 October 2017).

Scottish Liturgy 1982

Confession and absolution

a) God is love and we are his children. There is no room for fear in love. We love because he loved us first.

b) God, who is both power and love, forgive *us* and free *us* from *our* sins, heal and strengthen *us* by his Spirit, and raise *us* to new life in Christ our Lord.

Gloria

... and peace to his people on earth
...

Nicene Creed

a) ... for us men and for our salvation ...

Permitted change

Confession and absolution

a) God is love and we are **God's** children. There is no room for fear in love. We love because **God first loved us**.

See 1 John 4:19.

b) God, who is both power and love, forgive **you** and free **you** from **your** sins, heal and strengthen **you** by **the Holy Spirit**, and raise **you** to new life in Christ our Lord.

In addition to the change from 'his Spirit' to 'the Holy Spirit', a normative declarative *you* has been included, with a permissive *us*, in line with our own and wider Anglican tradition (see for example *Common Worship, A New Zealand Prayer Book, The Book of Alternative Services of the Anglican Church of Canada, the American Book of Common Prayer, An Anglican Prayer Book* (South Africa), used by several Provinces in Africa).

Gloria

... **and peace to God's people on earth ...**

Nicene Creed

a) ... **for us and for our salvation**
...

This is the ELLC text. The omission of the generic 'men' (Greek *ἀνθρώπους*, Latin *homines*) in apposition to 'us' may appear to

weaken slightly the sense of the original, but this is less serious than insisting on a gender-exclusive term. It should be stressed that 'us' means all humanity and not simply the persons reciting the Creed.

b) ... and was made man ...

b) ... and was made **human** ...

Although 'man' was retained in the original permitted changes, this won't do, since it does not correctly render the meaning of the Greek ἐνανθρωπήσαντα (ἐνανθρωπέω, literally, 'put on human nature'): it has nothing to do with the maleness of Jesus Christ. Ἐνανθρωπήσαντα means taking on a complete human nature, soul and body and mind, and all characteristics of a human being apart from sin.

c) We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father. With the Father and the Son, he is worshipped and glorified. He has spoken through the Prophets.

c) We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father, **who** with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified, **and** has spoken through the Prophets.

Eucharistic Prayer opening dialogue

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Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
It is right to give him thanks and praise.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
It is right to give **our** thanks and praise.

The Eucharistic prayer is an act of praise and thanksgiving to the Father. Following the basic Jewish prayer form, Christian liturgies bless God by giving thanks and praise. *Gratias agamus* represents this underlying Hebrew concept and is therefore properly expressed, first by 'Let

us give thanks', and more fully by 'It is right to give our thanks and praise'. The original assent in Greek and Latin is literally 'It is right and just', which is too abrupt in English (although it is used in the current English version of the Roman Missal). Any reference to God thus depends on the context and is an addition to the terse Latin or Greek. The addition of 'our thanks and praise' at the end of the line emphasizes the main thought and leads well into the great thanksgiving. The rendering 'It is right to give God thanks and praise', previously adopted, has an infelicitous alliteration of 'g'. The ELLC text, 'to give our thanks', moreover, reflects 'Let *us* give thanks' in the previous line. The context makes it clear that the thanks and praise are being given to God. This rendering has been adopted in *The Book of Alternative Services of the Anglican Church of Canada*.

Eucharistic Prayers

a) *Epiclesis*

Hear us, most merciful Father,
and send your Holy Spirit upon us
and upon this bread and this wine,
that, overshadowed by his life-giving
power,

they may be the Body and Blood of
your Son, and we may be kindled with
the fire of your love and renewed for
the service of your Kingdom.

Eucharistic Prayers

a) *Epiclesis*

Hear us, most merciful Father,
and send your Holy Spirit upon us
and upon this bread and this wine,
that, overshadowed by **the Spirit's**
life-giving power,

they may be the Body and Blood of
your Son, and we may be kindled with
the fire of your love and renewed for
the service of your Kingdom.

In the previous provision, the gendering
of the Holy Spirit in the Eucharistic
Epiclesis was overlooked.

b) *Eucharistic Prayer IV*

... He renewed the promise of his presence ...

Sentence after Communion

Give thanks to the Lord for he is gracious
and his mercy endures for ever.

Prayer after Communion I

which is your will for all mankind

Blessing

a) The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of his Son, Jesus

b) *Eucharistic Prayer IV*

Your son, Jesus Christ, renewed the promise of his presence ...

This clarification of the clause was part of the previous provision.

Sentence after Communion

We give thanks to **you** Lord, for **you are** gracious: and **your** mercy endures for ever.

This response is a direct quotation from Psalm 118:1. The previous provision, 'Give thanks to our gracious God: **whose love is everlasting**', does not do justice to the original, is more a completion of a thought than a verse and response, and is again marred by over-alliteration of 'g' – 'give ... gracious God'. Our solution is to adopt a direct quotation of the Psalm verse from the Psalter of *A New Zealand Prayer Book*.

Prayer after Communion I

which is your will for all **the world**

This change was part of the previous provision, and seems to be the neatest solution.

Blessing

a) The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus our Lord:

Christ our Lord:

The previous provision overlooked the gendering of God in this blessing. The modification uses a direct quotation from the Letter to the Philippians from which it is drawn (*Phil.* 4:7).

b) *Blessing for Easter*

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The God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the eternal covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight; and the blessing ...

The God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the eternal covenant, make you perfect in every good work; working in you that which is pleasing and good...

Final clause from *A New Zealand Prayer Book*, avoiding gendering of God.

c) *Blessing for Saints' Days*

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God give you grace to follow his saints ...

God give you grace to follow the saints ...

Again, a gendering of God is avoided.