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Even if we did not have all these theological problems to handle (but let us realise that we do and will have them) we still have the problem that the Bible, the historical liturgies, the vast majority of devotional books and hymns do not contain any examples of God being addressed (in contrast to being described) through feminine images. Though God is likened to a mother or to a mother bird several times in the Bible, God is never called 'Mother.' So in order to bring inclusivity to the sacred Scriptures, the liturgies and devotional books, there is a massive job of revision and excision, rewriting and rephrasing, creating and composing to be done. Or there is a massive job of producing new liturgies, services, hymns and books of prayers which are based wholly on inclusivist principles. Even if there were the people available to do this, can we be sure that there will be any consensus as to what ought to replace that which is being set aside?

GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

Not a few women who began by demanding inclusive language for deity have since realised that this cannot be achieved in Christianity, for its holy book, the Bible, is irredeemably patriarchal and Jesus himself accepted and commended a compassionate patriarchy. To rid the Bible of its patriarchy is to have very little of substance left! Thus they have left behind historic, orthodox Christianity in order to create new religions. It does not need much investigation and reflection to reveal that active feminism and historic, authentic Christianity cannot share the same bed: they cannot marry and they will not be fused.

A church which encourages the use of inclusive language for God in its public worship is on the way to becoming a sect, no better or worse than Jehovah's Witnesses or Christian Science. Certainly, the full use of inclusive language for God means a break away from the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church into sectarianism and schism. For a group which cannot wholeheartedly and without inhibition and hesitation pray 'Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name …' is not a Christian group, however much it is religious and worthy. I believe that committed Christians should graciously but firmly oppose all moves to introduce inclusive language for deity into Christian discourse and worship, and should be careful and cautious even about the use of inclusive language for humanity.

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Inclusive Language in the New Revised Standard Version

Walter Harrelson

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An interesting and honest inside story on the revision of the RSV showing how the principles of inclusive language were applied to human sexuality and to a personal God.

I. GETTING STARTED

The committee responsible for producing the NRSV did not begin with a mandate to make the language inclusive. The decision was taken along the way, and in stages, as the work of the committee proceeded. Whether the initiative lay more within the committee than external to it, I am not able to say. The first formal statement on the subject is a sheet produced by the late George MacRae, S.J., containing guidelines for avoiding masculine language in cases in which it was clear that both men and women were intended. It was a modest statement indeed, and was soon outgrown, but it served us well for some sessions. I recall no extended discussion about avoiding masculine references to the deity, although the matter was reviewed as the draft common language lectionary was being produced, and the translation committee reaffirmed its decision not to attempt to eliminate masculine references to God.

But as the work proceeded, several committee members were quite unhappy with two matters. First, we had only one woman member of the committee, a fact that continued to trouble us. Efforts had been made in the 1970s, and perhaps earlier, to secure the assent of women scholars to serve on the committee, but without success. On one occasion, probably around 1980, committee members at a business session of the entire committee proposed that we invite *several* women scholars at once and see if we could secure acceptances in that way. The plan succeeded, and several women scholars joined the committee during the next few years. Their presence gave additional incentive to the effort to eliminate more of the masculine language than our draft translations had done to that point, although not all of the women scholars held identical positions on this matter. p. 299

The second concern was how much masculine language was being retained in our draft translations. Could we not eliminate more of it and still remain by our mandate to revise the RSV only where it was necessary to do so? What tactics were available that we might not yet have tried? The usual approach was taken: a small committee was appointed to take some particularly difficult texts and see what could be done to reduce or eliminate the masculine references. The texts chosen were Exodus 21–23, the so-called Covenant Code, and Joshua 20, one of the accounts of the establishment of cities of refuge. The committee did its work primarily by correspondence, with an exchange of drafts of the two passages. The proposed changes were not greatly different from what we now have in the NRSV, but when they were presented to the entire committee, it was clear that they were not acceptable at all. To eliminate the 'his' in such legislation as 'Whoever strikes his father or his mother shall be put to death' (Exod. 21:15) was considered too radical, and making the sentence plural clearly would not work. (Later, of course, we frequently introduced the plural.) And in any case, legal language, it was pointed out, is conventional, stereotyped language, well understood by the community to apply to all, but necessarily put in fixed, conventional terms. It would be bad precedent indeed to begin to modify the Bible's legal language in such a way as was proposed. What we needed was greater precision in the use of this stereotypical language, a precision that was being helped along by the many specialist studies of ancient Near Eastern and biblical law. We would only introduce confusion when clarity was urgently needed.

The same was said about the revision of the cities-of-refuge text. There, the draft had proposed that we use 'the slayer' and 'the victim,' and the like, in place of using the pronoun 'he' so often. It seemed to the drafters of the proposal that these changes made

things much clearer, for they identified the parties much more precisely. But the time was not ripe for such a change, and the draft proposals were voted down. The full committee indicated its desire not to try to make the legal language of the Bible sex-inclusive, although I believe no formal vote to that effect was taken.

Thereafter, the several groups working on the Hebrew Bible, the Apocrypha, and the New Testament simply worked out their own approaches, sharing them over meals and in general discussion with other groups, and a consensus built up over the remaining years that we could and must eliminate masculine language that was not clearly intended to refer only to males. A number of strategies were devised for doing so, and the result is reflected in the NRSV. The two small p. 300 editorial committees that went through the entire text (one for the Hebrew Bible and the Apocrypha and one for the New Testament) were charged to catch the remaining omissions that could be cared for and to smooth out, to the extent possible, the varied practices of the several groups.

II. THE INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE POLICY

The policy that developed over the last decade of the committee's life finally came to have the assent of all members, in my judgement. That policy was quite simple: the committee should remove all masculine language in referring to human beings apart from those texts that clearly referred to men. In order to do so, the committee adopted a number of agreed conventions, chief among them the use of the plural instead of the singular, even in some instances in which the committee believed that only males were involved ('My child' for 'My son' in Proverbs, for example). It was agreed that we would not use 'persons' or 'people,' unless no alternative could be found. We would use 'one' or 'someone' as necessary, but sparingly. When a Psalmist was referring to an enemy, we would retain the 'he' or 'his,' since otherwise we would be losing the vivid, personal force of the psalm. Certain critical texts, such as those that employed 'son of man' for humankind, were at first handled on an ad hoc basis, but as the work proceeded those, too, began to be eliminated. Ezekiel's many references to the prophet as 'son of man' (Hebrew *ben 'adam*) were translated 'O mortal' or 'mortal,' a happy solution, we thought, since Ezekiel is clearly stressing the prophet's humanity in contrast with God's transcendent glory and authority.

Daniel's 'son of man' was treated differently, since there the Aramaic 'one like a human being,' which was the translation adopted, clearly means just that. The New Testament references, however, retain Son of Man.

Have the translators been consistent in their application of the policy? They have been quite successful, on the whole, with the result that readers now have a largely inclusive-language translation that can easily be made more inclusive even as one reads from the lectern or pulpit. Let me illustrate and make some comments about particularly troublesome cases.

Psalm 8 is a quite good instance of the principle of making texts inclusive by the use of the plural pronoun. I begin with v.3:

> When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,
> the moon and the stars that you have established, p. 301
> what are human beings that you are mindful of them,
> mortals that you care for them?
> Yet you have made them a little lower than God,
> and crowned them with glory and honour …

It is unmistakable that these plurals express more clearly, for contemporary English readers, the sense of the Hebrew text than singular pronouns would express that sense. And in this instance the use of the plural for the Hebrew terms *'enosh* and *ben 'adam* just as well renders the meaning as would 'man' and 'son of man,' unless one is interpreting the psalm to have reference to Israel's divinized earthly king, as some scholars still do.

The problem of how to quote this text in the New Testament is solved by simply using the language for 'man' and 'son of man' that had been used in the Hebrew text. The Greek is given in footnotes, along with an additional note to the effect that the terms 'man' and 'son of man' in the Hebrew text refer to all humankind. I wonder, today, if we could not have made that footnote clearer, since we do not in fact have 'man' and 'son of man' in the translation of the Hebrew psalm!

Another good example of the committee's practice, involving more change, occurs in the translation of Psalm 41. There we decided to translate some direct speech as indirect speech so as to make the text inclusive. Instead of translating, 'My enemies say in malice, "When will he (i.e., the Psalmist) die, and his name perish?" ' we translate, 'My enemies wonder in malice when I will die, and my name perish.' And again, in v.8, we have, 'They think that a deadly thing has fastened on me, that I will not rise again from where I lie,' for the direct quotation, 'They say, "A deadly thing has fastened on him; he will not rise again from where he lies." ' Such a change could be criticized for diminishing the concreteness and vividity of the Psalmist's language, but I believe that little has been lost in our rendering.

But we were not able to make all the language inclusive (and neither were our colleagues who translated the New Testament). In the translation of Psalm 109, for example, we finally agreed that we would have to let some masculine references remain, since otherwise the Psalmist's enemy could not adequately be depicted in contrast to the Psalmist. Note v.6, where we have introduced the words, 'They say,' in order to make it clear that it is the Psalmist's accuser who calls down the terrible curse on the Psalmist, not the other way around (vv. 7–19). The Psalmist's prayer resumes at verse 20, where the language is once more inclusive. But the Psalmist has been *necessarily* identified as male, it would appear, though we *could* have translated, 'They call for p. 302 a wicked person to be appointed against me;/for an accuser to stand on my right.'/When I am tried, let me be found guilty …,' and so on—following the device used in Psalm 41.

The fact is that we tried that approach, but the farther we proceeded, the more complicated matters got. See, for example, v. 17: 'I loved to curse, they said; let curses come on me,' It was too much, with the result that we gave up on Psalm 109 and left the Psalmist identified as masculine.

One happy discovery was that Psalm 131 is translated in such a way as to suggest that the author is a woman, not a man. See especially v.2 which now reads at the end: '… my soul is like the weaned child that is with me.' This is surely a precise translation of the Hebrew, and following upon the preceding line, '… like a weaned child with its mother …,' strongly suggests that a mother is speaking.

Colleagues in the New Testament committee gave up, it seems evident, on texts such as Mt. 7:24–27, probably because they too saw that concreteness and vividness would also be damaged there. They read, '… like a wise man who built his house upon a rock,' and '… like a foolish man who built his house on sand.' In this case, moreover, the builder is so likely to have been male that one might argue that it would have been inappropriate to eliminate the masculine reference. The same may be true of Mt. 5:25, where the text still reads, 'Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are on the way to court with him …' I would have preferred there to see, however, '… while the two of you are on the way to court….'

III. INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE THAT WORKS PARTICULARLY WELL

Let me now offer some instances of inclusive language that in my judgement the translators have handled particularly well. In the New Testament, I single out several instances from 1 Cor. and elsewhere that I think are praiseworthy. Beginning at 1:10 and throughout the epistle, 'brothers' has very often become 'brothers and sisters,' with a note that indicates that the Greek reads 'brothers.' Other instances of 'brothers' in the Greek need to be translated otherwise. For example, in 1 Cor. 14:26, 'my brothers' becomes 'my friends,' as it does in 14:39. But in 6:6, 'brother' and 'brothers' have become '… a believer goes to court against a believer.' The changes for the sake of inclusiveness once again give us more precise and accurate translations than would the mere rendering of the normal meaning of the Greek.

In other places, both the New Testament and the Old Testament committees have rendered 'brother' by 'neighbour' or 'kin,' a good p. 303 solution in many instances, although there are distinct Hebrew and Greek words for 'neighbour,' and readers could suppose, were there not a note, that the Hebrew or Greek has the usual word for 'neighbour.' Numerous instances of this kind of inclusive translation occur. See, for example, Mt. 7:3, '… the speck in your neighbor's eye,' and Lev. 19:17, 'You shall not hate in your heart anyone of your kin.' When 'kin' or 'kinsfolk' is chosen for 'brother' or 'brothers,' frequently no note is given.

For 'man' or 'men,' many different solutions are found. In 1 Cor. 1:25, NRSV reads, 'For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength.' Gen. 9:6 reads, 'Whoever sheds the blood of human,/by a human shall that person's blood be shed;/for in his own image/God made humankind.' That limps quite a bit poetically, though the committee trying to revise that little poem worked hours on it—but at that point we had not quite hit our stride in discovering inclusive language. The use of 'others' is often a successful solution; see Mt. 6:1, 'Beware of practising your piety before others….' We also use 'one' and 'anyone' very frequently.

In Acts 2 it would have been possible to have treated 2:14 in the way that 2:22 is treated, reading the first passage 'You that are Judeans' instead of 'Men of Judea,' just as 2:22 is read—'You that are Israelites.' Similarly, in Gen. 2:7, we could have read '… then the LORD God formed a man …' instead of 'then the LORD God formed man.' I fear that there may be a considerable number of other instances in which we simply overlooked places where the text could have been made inclusive.

The Sermon on the Mount also has excellent instances of inclusivity. See, for example, Mt. 6:24:

> No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.

The saying about the rich (Mt. 19:23–24) is also handled well:

> Truly I tell you, it will be hard for a rich person to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.

IV. REMAINING PROBLEMS

But problems clearly remain. Have we adequately addressed the language that gives trouble and offence to others who take exception P. 304 to certain forms of reference? We have eliminated 'dumb' in favour of 'speechless' or the like, and we have rarely used the term 'leper' but have referred to persons with 'a leprous disease,' with a note indicating

that several kinds of skin disease are covered by the biblical term often translated 'leprosy.' But we probably are on the threshold of new forms of reference to persons with handicapping conditions, and it will be wise now to begin to collect references that can be used in a forthcoming revision.

More critical are such terms for the deity as 'Lord,' which the NRSV has put in small capital letters when the personal name for the deity, YHWH, appears in the text. We did not consider long enough, perhaps, the question whether there might be a more suitable term than 'Lord' for the Tetragrammaton. We did briefly consider the term chosen by James Moffatt in his translation of the Bible, 'the Eternal,' but there was no real support for its adoption. We talked of using 'the Sovereign,' but that seemed no more suitable than 'the Lord.' We needed 'the Creator' for those occurrences of just that term in the Hebrew. Finally, since we found no better alternative for 'the Lord,' we let that familiar term stand.

We were in agreement that we should not eliminate all the personal pronouns for the deity, though we did find that often we could reduce the number of such pronouns by simply eliminating those that seemed unnecessary. I find that readers are actually in a rather good position with the NRSV to make such adjustments in public reading as they think appropriate, now that the unnecessary masculine references to human beings have been so widely removed. It is a genuine pleasure, as I have had occasion to discover, to be able to read the lessons appointed for the day in such a way as to eliminate entirely masculine references to the deity, and to do so without having had to retranslate or reproduce the biblical lessons. With only a little practice and with nothing but the NRSV in hand, we can hear an English rendering of the NRSV lessons from Tanakh and Psalter, from Epistle and Gospel, that is genuinely inclusive.

The NRSV has its flaws. Numerous readings are not what one or more of the translators would have preferred. No doubt there are mistakes, instances of lack of consistency, infelicities of expression, and perhaps some howlers. But on the basis of my re-examination of considerable portions of the text I would judge that it is by far our most inclusive Bible, the one best suited for public reading among all the newer translations, and (as will be indicated elsewhere in this issue) our most accurate available English Bible. That is a very great deal indeed, and we have the translators, and our Princeton Seminary colleague Bruce Metzger in particular, to thank for this achievement.

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Feminist Hermeneutics and Evangelical Biblical Interpretation

David M. Scholer

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