

The Eucharistic Materials in *Enriching Our Worship 1*: A Consideration of its Trinitarian Theology

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Enriching Our Worship 1 (1998) provides official supplemental liturgical texts for the Rite II services of Morning and Evening Prayer, the Litany, and the Holy Eucharist in the 1979 Book of Common Prayer. The materials can be used either as a substitution for as much or as little of the Prayer Book services as one desires, or as a complete rite. One of the guiding principles of Enriching Our Worship 1 is to use only non-gendered language for God. This essay considers the eucharistic portions of Enriching Our Worship 1 from the perspective of trinitarian theology and proceeds in three stages: I begin with an outline of the specific revisions of Enriching Our Worship 1 to the 1979 BCP Rite II for the Holy Eucharist; second, I ask what sort of trinitarian theology Enriching Our Worship 1 expresses; finally, I consider the principles that guide these revisions and offer a critical assessment of the sources used to buttress these principles.

Introduction: Setting the Stage

The Episcopal Church's official engagement with expansive/inclusive liturgical language for God began in 1985, when the General Convention "authorized the development of supplemental inclusive-language texts" through a series of materials produced by the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music (SCLM).¹ These resources provided (among other resources) alternative forms of Morning and

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¹ Ruth A. Meyers, "Ongoing Liturgical Revision in the Episcopal Church USA," *Studia Liturgica* 31.1 (2001): 61. General Convention resolution 1985–A095 initiated this work. For more on this history, see Ruth A. Meyers and Jean Campbell, "Expanding Liturgical Language in the Episcopal Church USA," *Studia Liturgica*

Evening Prayer, as well as the celebration of the Holy Eucharist. The first volume, *Liturgical Texts for Evaluation* (1987),² significantly reduced gender-specific language in favor of terms like "God" or "humanity." A second set of texts, *Supplemental Liturgical Texts* (1989),³ takes a somewhat different and more balanced approach to gendered language and uses "both masculine and feminine words, images, and metaphors."⁴ Both of these collections were authorized as complete rites to be used in places of the corresponding liturgy in the 1979 *Book of Common Prayer* when authorized by the bishop. The next phase, which includes both *Supplemental Liturgical Materials* (1991) and *Enriching Our Worship 1* (1998), sought to balance traditional language with terms and images underutilized in scripture and tradition.⁵ Thus, the term "expansive" is the preferred adjective to describe this language, rather than inclusive or diverse.⁶ These texts, in contrast, were more explicitly *supplemental* in nature, meaning that one could draw as much or as little as desired.

Exactly how congregations are supposed to use *EOW1* is not totally clear. The directions for use state that the materials can be used in two ways: as a resource "in conjunction with the Rite Two liturgies of the 1979 BCP," or "to develop an entire liturgy using the supplemental texts. The entire eucharistic liturgy can be designed with only the collect of the day from the BCP being added" (*EOW1*, 14). In contrast, the introduction written by Phoebe Pettingell for the SCLM says that, like its predecessor *Supplemental Liturgical Materials* (1991 and 1996), *EOW1* "avoids supplying complete rites, providing instead a collection of texts" (*EOW1*, 9). These statements seem to be directly contradictory and neither statement was included in what was approved by General Convention in 1997 or by every subsequent

26.1 (1996): 119–127. Meyers chaired the SCLM from 2009 to 2015 and was involved on its various subcommittees since 1990.

² *Liturgical Texts for Evaluation* (New York: Standing Liturgical Commission, 1987).

³ *Commentary on Prayer Book Studies 30: Containing Supplemental Liturgical Texts* (New York: Church Hymnal, 1989).

⁴ *Supplemental Liturgical Materials* (New York: Church Hymnal, 1991), 6.

⁵ *Enriching Our Worship 1: Morning and Evening Prayer, The Great Litany, and The Holy Eucharist* (New York: Church Publishing, 1998); subsequent references will be included in the text as *EOW1*.

⁶ Ruth A. Meyers, "Introduction," in *How Shall We Pray? Expanding Our Language about God*, Liturgical Studies Two, ed. Ruth A. Meyers (New York: Church Hymnal, 1994), xi.

Convention.⁷ These two different approaches to the use of *EWI* makes it difficult to know exactly how to approach a theological reading of its content. Reluctantly, my approach here is to analyze *EWI* as a whole eucharistic rite, all the while acknowledging that this may not have been the intention of General Convention and that *EWI* is often used in a more *ad hoc* fashion. Nonetheless, the particular aspects of the Rite II liturgy for the Holy Eucharist in the 1979 BCP that are absent from *EWI* are the very aspects that some wish to minimize in future revisions. Which is to say that *EWI* looks a lot like the revised eucharistic rite some would like to see in a new Prayer Book. Thus, I offer this thought experiment as an exercise that analyzes *EWI* as an entire rite in order to gain the clearest picture of its theology as a whole.

The SCLM was clear that it sought to balance a number of concerns and priorities in the creation of *EWI*. The first is the concern raised by masculine language for God in the prayer experiences of women (*EWI*, 5), and Meyers explains elsewhere that “the development of inclusive-language or expansive-language liturgies has been a response to feminist concerns about masculine God-language.”⁸ Their solution has consciously avoided the modalistic “Creator/Redeemer/Sanctifier”⁹ and instead excavated language and metaphors from the patristic writers, the medieval mystics, and underutilized images from the scriptures (*EWI*, 8). The concern with the language of historic Anglican liturgies in many of the preparatory essays is that their (over)emphasis on certain attributes or aspects of God—such as “God as law-giving sovereign” or God’s “fatherliness”—runs the risk of becoming a “idolatry” in which our view of God “is skewed and

⁷ The text of *EWI* that was approved (noting the few amendments to it in Resolution 1997-A075) may be found at www.episcopalarchives.org/e-archives/acts/.

⁸ Ruth A. Meyers, “Principles for Liturgical Language,” in Meyers, *How Shall We Pray?*, 94. The most substantial essay that was published in two of the supplemental booklets is by the liturgical scholar Leonel L. Mitchell, titled “Background”; see *Commentary on Prayer Book Studies* 30, C-5–C-14 and *Supplemental Liturgical Materials*, 57–64.

⁹ For critiques of this proposed baptismal formulation from theologians attentive to feminist concerns, see Catherine Mowry LaCugna, “The Baptismal Formula, Feminist Objections, and Trinitarian Theology,” *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 26.2 (Spring 1989): 235–250; Gail Ramshaw-Schmidt, “Naming the Trinity: Orthodoxy and Inclusivity,” *Worship* 60.6 (November 1986): 491–498.

obscured.”¹⁰ At the same time, the SCLM notes that “at all points along the way in the process of selection and development of texts the question has been asked: Is this text consistent with the Trinitarian and Christological formulations which we, as Anglicans, regard as normative and the ground of our common prayer?” (*EOWI*, 5–6). The SCLM expressed this commitment in the following statement of their working principles:

In Christian liturgy, the truth of the Gospel which proclaims Jesus as the Son of God the Father and as Lord is essential. The terms “Father,” “Son,” and “Lord” are retained as expressive of that truth. New metaphors and images for God should be grounded in scripture and the tradition of the Church. Within any liturgy, no single prayer can encompass the totality of the faith of the Church. However, the whole liturgy must have a comprehensive expression of that faith.¹¹

The SCLM identified the “real shortage of feedback” as “the greatest stumbling block to progress” (*EOWI*, 12), and this essay is one step in seeking to remedy that deficiency.

The focus of this study is solely on the materials for the Holy Eucharist in *EOWI* and its trinitarian theology. My central question is identical to the one the SCLM put before the Episcopal Church: Does the theology expressed in *EOWI* reflect the trinitarian theology expressed in the early ecumenical councils and in historic Anglican Prayer Books, including the 1979 American Prayer Book? I begin with an outline of the specific revisions of *EOWI* to the Rite II service for the Holy Eucharist, after which I take a step back and ask what sort of trinitarian theology it expresses. Part III is an examination of the principles that seem to guide these revisions and a critical assessment of the sources used to buttress these principles.

I. A Summary of the Changes for the Holy Eucharist in EOWI

An opening comment will be helpful. The 1979 *Book of Common Prayer* introduces some radical revisions to the Prayer Book tradition

¹⁰ Ellen K. Wondra, “O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing,” in Meyers, *How Shall We Pray?*, 12.

¹¹ *Supplemental Liturgical Materials*, expanded edition, 10; cited in Meyers, “On-going Liturgical Revision,” 63.

that preceded it. For example, the baptismal rite was basically rewritten from the ground up in 1979 and the communion liturgy is both reordered and contains much new material. *EOWI* does not offer analogous structural revisions. Instead, *EOWI*'s revisions are an attempt to broaden language about God within the "normative context" of the 1979 BCP, "whose primary imagery is quite different from that of the supplemental materials."¹² Thus, *EOWI* must be evaluated within the context of the changes it introduces to the standard 1979 Prayer Book, which remains the liturgical and doctrinal authority for Episcopalians. The overriding principle of *EOWI*'s changes, Ruth Meyers explains, is to "expand (though not replace) the language of the Prayer Book." This goal is accomplished by limiting all appearances of the terms "Father" and "Son" to the Nicene Creed and the Lord's Prayer (and the *Gloria in excelsis*, if used).¹³ The use of both terms is significant in the 1979 BCP. In Rite I, for example, the term "Father" appears eight times in Prayer 1 and seven times in Prayer 2, with similarly substantial instances for the term "Son" (nine in Prayer 1, eight in Prayer 2). In Rite II, "Father" is used five times in Prayers A and D, and three times in B and C; "Son" likewise appears between two and four times in the Rite II prayers.

The revisions of *EOWI* can be categorized under four broad headings. First, all appearances of the triad of terms "Father," "Son," and "Spirit," as well as the word "Trinity," are removed. These changes can be seen in a number of important places. While all of the opening acclamations are revised, the first and most notable of these is the revision of the acclamation appointed for times outside of Easter and Lent,¹⁴ with two alternatives offered: "Blessed be the one, holy, and living God. / Glory to God for ever and ever" and, "Blessed be our God. / For ever and ever. Amen" (*EOWI*, 50; Good Friday option, BCP, 276). Another notable disappearance of explicitly trinitarian language is in the optional concluding blessing (it is only required in Rite I). The text of each *EOWI* blessing is possibly trinitarian, but not necessarily so (*EOWI*, 70–71). In one, the Father is the "eternal

¹² Wondra, "O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing," in Meyers, *How Shall We Pray?*, 10.

¹³ Ruth A. Meyers, "Treasures New and Old: Imagery for Liturgical Prayer," in *Gleanings: Essays on Expansive Language with Prayers for Various Occasions*, ed. Ruth A. Meyers and Phoebe Pettingell (New York: Church Publishing, 2001), 32.

¹⁴ Note that the acclamations provided in the 1979 BCP for Eastertide and penitential occasions are not explicitly trinitarian.

Majesty" and the Son the "incarnate Word." In another, the Father (presumably) is "the God of Abraham and Sarah," the Son is "Jesus Christ born of our sister Mary," and the Spirit is the one "who broods over the world as a mother over her children." A third speaks of "God's Blessing," "Christ's peace," and "the Spirit's outpouring." And still another of the "Wisdom of God," the "Love of God," and the "Grace of God," a triadic construction that also does not appear to make a direct correspondence to particular persons of the Trinity.

Additionally, all masculine pronouns for God disappear and masculine pronouns for Jesus are only used when referring to him while on earth. In the third section of the Nicene Creed, for example, the masculine pronouns for the Holy Spirit are removed through the judicious use of relative pronouns, which makes it like the Rite I form of the Creed.¹⁵ In the same section, "and was made man" is changed to "and became truly human." Ruth Meyers explains that this change was made in order to emphasize "that it is not the maleness but the humanity of Jesus that is significant in the redemption of humanity. . . . By not using the masculine pronouns [for the pre-incarnate and ascended Jesus], the texts imply that the divine Christ is not necessary male."¹⁶ Elsewhere, in place of "Father" and "Son" new forms of address are introduced: "Christ our true and only Light," "Holy Wisdom," and "Beloved God" are a few that appear in the optional collects; "God of all mercy" in the Confession of Sin; "Gracious God," "holy and living God," "God of all creation," and "Holy One of Blessing" are all forms of address that appear in the eucharistic prayers, while "Word" and "Wisdom" are used frequently for Jesus. Since the term "Son" is not used, the corresponding adjective "only" also disappears completely.

Historically, anaphoras are explicitly addressed to the Father, as the Council of Carthage in 397 instructed, "When one stands at the altar let prayer be always directed to the Father."¹⁷ This practice

¹⁵ Another notable change is that the *Incarnatus* is corrected to reflect the actual language of the conciliar Creed so that the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary are both the object of the preposition: *ke sarkothénta ek Pnévmatos Agíou ke Mariás tis Parthénou* is translated "was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary" (EOW1, 53).

¹⁶ Meyers, "Treasures New and Old," in Meyers and Pettingell, *Gleanings*, 33.

¹⁷ See Paul F. Bradshaw and Maxwell E. Johnson, *The Eucharistic Liturgies: Their Evolution and Interpretation* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2012), 70.

was followed in all historic Anglican Prayer Books and in each of the eucharistic prayers in the 1979 BCP, with their various forms of address to the Father: "O Lord, holy Father, almighty, everlasting God"; "Almighty God, our heavenly Father"; "Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth"; "Holy and gracious Father"; and often simply, "Father." But because the operating principle in *EOW1* is not to use any gendered terms for God, the addressee of those eucharistic prayers is opaque. The following names are used when addressing God, before and after the *Sanctus*): Prayer 1: "You" and "Gracious God, creator of the universe and giver of life"; Prayer 2: "Holy and gracious God, source of life abundant" and "Holy and living God"; Prayer 3: "our true and loving God / Holy One of Blessing" and "Creator of all" (*EOW 1*, 57–63).

The second category of changes concerns the use of the term "Lord." The word is retained in three places: first, in the Nicene Creed ("one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God" and "the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life"); second, in the opening dialogue of the *Sursum corda* that begins the Great Thanksgiving ("The Lord be with you / We lift them up to the Lord / Let us give thanks to the Lord our God"); and third, in the *Sanctus* ("Holy, holy, holy Lord" and "who comes in the name of the Lord"). Thus it disappears from the Easter acclamation, the Salutation, the response after the lessons, the Gospel proclamations, the Peace, the eucharistic prayers, and the postcommunion prayers.

Finally, there is a smattering of other changes, either in the rubrics or in the disappearance of certain notable components of eucharistic liturgies. First, the Collect for Purity and the use of the *Kyrie eleison* alongside or in place of the *Gloria in excelsis* are not provided as options.¹⁸ Second, the rubric that directs the Nicene Creed to be used on all Sundays and Holy Days is cut from *EOW1*. The final, rather striking, change is the disappearance of the Lord's Prayer, both here and in the revised forms for Morning and Evening Prayer.¹⁹ Since *EOW1* allows for an entire eucharistic liturgy to "be designed

¹⁸ The *Trisagion* (though not the *Kyrie*) was provided as an option in *Liturgical Texts for Evaluation* (1987) and *Supplemental Liturgical Texts* (1989), but not in *Supplemental Liturgical Materials* (1991).

¹⁹ Both *Liturgical Texts for Evaluation* and *Supplemental Liturgical Texts* retain the Lord's Prayer in the Offices, the rubric indicating that the Nicene Creed is said on all Sundays and Holy Days, and the Lord's Prayer directly following the "AMEN"

with only the collect of the day from the BCP being added" (*EOWI*, 14), it appears that the eucharist can be celebrated without the *Gloria in excelsis*, the Nicene Creed, or the Lord's Prayer and thus without a single reference to the Father, any reference to Jesus as the Father's only and eternal Son, and any language that hints at how Father, Son, and Holy Spirit related to each other, whether by procession or operation.

II. The Trinitarian Theology of *EOWI*

How might the trinitarian theology in the eucharistic materials in *EOWI* be characterized? Simply put, it is open to a wide range of interpretations, which only increase as the *Gloria in excelsis*, Nicene Creed, and Lord's Prayer decrease. Most significantly, addressing the eucharistic prayers to "God" and not to a particular Divine Person introduces a number of (unintended?) ambiguities. The eucharistic prayer may be addressed to the Father or the First Person, but the linguistic construction of *EOWI* makes this unclear. Thus, it *could* be read as binitarian: the "God" to whom the prayer is addressed is Jesus and the Holy Spirit (without a third Person). In fact, there is also nothing in *EOWI*—especially the eucharistic prayers—that precludes a subordinationist trinitarian theology à la Arius or Neo-Arians like Eunomius. Without either the non-gendered procession language that was so central to the pre- and post-Nicene debates—Unbegotten (*agenetos*) and Only-begotten (*monogenés*)—nor any terms that indicate procession or subsisting relations, there is no clarity about how these Three might be One in any meaningful sense. To be sure, a major piece of the argument that Athanasius put forward was that actions like "saving" and "sanctifying" are actions that can only be undertaken by God and not by a creature. But obviously third- and fourth-century Christians were willing to attribute salvific actions to a Son and a Holy Spirit who are unique and divinely-elevated creatures and who by grace are given a distinctive place in creation, salvation, and sanctification.

One of the main reasons for the trinitarian ambiguity of *EOWI* is its particular approach to what Trinitarianism *means*. The challenge,

of the anaphora. *Supplemental Liturgical Materials* contains all the changes found in *EOWI*.

the SCLM explains, is to be “faithful to the creedal tradition of the Church, while, at the same time, naming the God who is ‘One in Three and Three in One’ in non-gender specific terms.”²⁰ But this is to work backwards, theologically speaking. This would seem to imply that Christians first had a metaphysical amendment to the more traditional take on monotheism—namely, that there is a “threeness” in this oneness—to which they then added the terms “Father,” “Son,” and “Holy Spirit.” But historically speaking, the term “Trinity” appears only *after* struggling to make sense of the scriptural witness about Jesus, the Father, and the Holy Spirit—regarding their identity, their identity-in-relationship, how God saves as “Father,” “Son,” and “Holy Spirit,” and so forth. Ironically, the SCLM’s approach *begins* with metaphysics, which is precisely one of the principal contextual concerns lobbied against conciliar language by many of the preparatory essays and theologians like Catherine LaCugna: namely, that there was too much focus “on the unity of God and with being reliant on an alien Platonic metaphysics which serves to prevent a fully Trinitarian theology.”²¹ They too begin with “Trinitarianism” rather than the scriptural language.

When we also remember that part of the method of *EOWI* is to restore the full range of scriptural naming for God, it is even stranger that the three predominant terms in the New Testament—“Father,” “Son,” and “Lord”—are basically absent. The idea that trinitarian theology is at core a claim that God is “One in Three and Three in One” is not only to abstract the doctrine in a way that would be quite foreign to its classical expositors, but also to suggest that there can be quite different and even conflicting trinitarian theologies. Thus the question cannot be, “Is the theology of this rite trinitarian?” but rather, “What is the precise shape of the rite’s trinitarian theology?” These are critical matters to consider, since the task of theology is necessarily tied to the lived Christian faith in prayer, contemplation, and worship. The presence of the *Gloria in excelsis*, the Nicene Creed, and the Lord’s Prayer all help mitigate against these ambiguities. But the further these components are marginalized, the wider the range of trinitarian obfuscation.

²⁰ *Commentary on Prayer Book Studies* 30, C-20.

²¹ As described by Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 364.

III. An Evaluation of the Principles Given for the Construction of EOW1

After outlining the changes that *EOW1* makes to the 1979 BCP eucharistic liturgy and some of their theological implications and ambiguities, I now will examine two of the major arguments offered as apologia for the removal of gendered language for God and the marginalization of the Nicene Creed. What are the theological and historical sources used to buttress these arguments and how should they be evaluated?

Principle 1: No Distinction between Proper Name and Metaphor

One part of the argument for the God-language used in *EOW1* is the claim that there is no meaningful distinction between proper names and metaphors. "Father should be viewed as a metaphor rather than the revealed name of God," Ruth Meyers argues.²² Leonel Mitchell notes that Father is certainly a "distinctive insight into Jesus' own relationship with God" and that it allows us to articulate something that other language about God fails to do: namely, "to name the unbegotten Source of Godhead in the other two persons of the Trinity."²³ Meyers also concedes that "some claim that 'Father, Son, and Holy Spirit' is the revealed name of God and must be used in order to maintain the historic identity of Christian worship."²⁴ But when used incorrectly, "Father" allows us "to invest the One who is 'without body, parts, or passions' with human characteristics like maleness, or a beard, or even the faults of human fathers."²⁵

The essayists and the sources on which they rely offer no sustained engagement with those scripture scholars who argue on scriptural grounds for the centrality of "Father" and "Son" language as both historically accurate when it comes to early Christian belief and also normative for Christian theology.²⁶ The language of "Father" (and thus "Son") is afforded a certain degree of authority, presumably

²² Meyers, "Principles for Liturgical Language," in Meyers, *How Shall We Pray?*, 90.

²³ Mitchell, "Background," in *Commentary on Prayer Book Studies* 30, C-9-C-10.

²⁴ Meyers, "Treasures New and Old," in Meyers and Pettingell, *Gleanings*, 33.

²⁵ Mitchell, "Background," in *Commentary on Prayer Book Studies* 30, C-10

²⁶ Meyers addresses this briefly in "Principles for Liturgical Language," in Meyers, *How Shall We Pray?*, 87-92. For an example of such scholarship, see the essays from major scripture scholars in Gilles Emery and Matthew Levering, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of the Trinity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

because of how dominant it is in the Gospels, but its usefulness is immediately undercut because of possible misunderstanding. Nor is there much in the way of engagement with (or attempts to refute) the major voices in Western trinitarian theology. Thomas Aquinas, for instance, directly addresses the question of whether "Father" is a proper name given in the *Prima Pars* of the *Summa Theologiae*.²⁷ In fact, he considers many concerns raised by these authors and provides a clear reason not only why Father is a proper name for the First Person but also why this fatherhood is fundamentally different from human paternity.

A proper name, Thomas explains, "signifies that whereby the person is distinguished from all other persons." The reason this name is applied to the First Person is that "it is paternity which distinguishes the person of the Father from all other persons."²⁸ This term "paternity" (as well as other terms like "person"), he is careful to note, is used *differently* for God than for humans. For humans, paternity designates only the *relation* of a person.²⁹ Paternity is not essential to being either an animal or a human being or even a human male. Paternity is not even essential to the nature of a human male who is also a father. But in God, the term "Father" means something unique. Unlike in any creature, "relation" in God is not a *quality* of God but "is the divine essence itself."³⁰ Thus the persons of the Trinity are unlike anything in creation because they are "subsisting relations."³¹ The paternity of my two children indicates only a certain set of relationships (namely, by way of my wife and to my children). But paternity is distinct from my nature as human, since there was a (long) time when I was *not* a father. In God, however, "paternity" speaks of who the First Person *is*: the eternal begetter of the Son and the spirator of the Spirit.³² Thus, when the term "person" is used for God, it "signifies a relation subsisting in the divine nature."³³ The particular name "Father" simultaneously designates a *relation* that is at the same time

²⁷ See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I.33.ii.ad 3. One exception to this generalization is Ellen K. Wondra's essay, "Gender and Trinitarian Language," in Meyers, *How Shall We Pray?*, 102–112.

²⁸ *Summa Theologiae* I.33.ii.corpus.

²⁹ *Summa Theologiae* I.33.ii.ad 1.

³⁰ *Summa Theologiae* I.29.iv.corpus.

³¹ See *Summa Theologiae* I.39, specifically I.39.i.ad 1.

³² See *Summa Theologiae* I.36, especially I.36.i.respondeo.

³³ *Summa Theologiae* I.33.ii.ad 1.

the *essence* of this person. The implication is that "it is paternity which distinguishes the person of the Father from all other persons. Hence this name 'Father,' whereby paternity is signified, is the proper name of the person of the Father."³⁴

Thomas's argument is instructive for a number of reasons. First, the claim that "Father" is a proper name and not a metaphor is not based on a simplistic appeal to the fact that Jesus addressed God as Father (though the weight of the usage is not small in the least: sixty-five times in the Synoptics and over one hundred times in the Gospel of John).³⁵ Rather, Thomas's discussion asks what this repeated name could *mean*, since what it means in God must be different than for human beings. Second, it raises one of the most basic aspects of classical trinitarian thought: that Father, Son, and Spirit are subsisting relations. In other words, their eternal relations, each to the others, *are constitutive of who they are as persons*. Thus, they are not simply "One in Three and Three in One." Their unique "oneness" comes from the singularity of their relations to each other, to which we are privy by way of scriptural revelation. The oneness of the three Persons is constituted by two distinct processions: the Father as the Unbegotten relates to the Son by way of a procession of begetting, while the Father relates to the Spirit by way of a procession of spirating.

Principle 2: The Importance of Context

"As we move toward Prayer Book revision," Ruth Meyers argues, "we will need to consider what we want to retain from those prayers and to explore scripture, historical texts, and prayers from other churches to find language that will root us in scripture and tradition while also giving voice to the lively experience of faith today."³⁶

Context is the broadest of the concerns that lie beneath the desire to reform the liturgical language whereby "Father" and "Son" is *de facto* moved to the periphery. The emphasis on the current cultural

³⁴ *Summa Theologiae* I.33.ii.corpus.

³⁵ For a discussion of the centrality of sonship in the scriptures, see Jon D. Levenson, *The Death and Resurrection of the Beloved Son: The Transformation of Child Sacrifice in Judaism and Christianity* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1993).

³⁶ Ruth A. Meyers, "Imaging a New Prayer Book," Convocation, Church Divinity School of the Pacific, October 8, 2015, unpublished manuscript without pagination. This manuscript is, at the time of this essay, under review for publication in another journal. Dr. Meyers kindly provided me with a copy of the manuscript for use in this essay and I wish to express my appreciation for her generous assistance.

climate is related in a certain way to the first principle that undergirds *EWI*, namely the lack of any real distinction between names and metaphors. The argument goes something like this: the language of the Creed is both opaque to the modern person ("impenetrable and a stumbling block," as Meyers puts it) and also participates in an oppressive male-only language when it comes to God. The masculine language for God reflects the patriarchal culture in which the scriptures were written and within which both the scriptures have been read and the tradition expounded for most of Christian history. This context has shifted quite radically in the West, especially in the past thirty years, which raises the question: Should the church revise its language for God?

"I think we also need to look at the creed," Meyers suggests. "We might require the Nicene Creed on only a few occasions each year. Or we might allow the use of the Apostles' Creed. We might even consider one or more contemporary creeds."³⁷ She offers a number of reasons for the further reduction of the use of the Nicene Creed in the eucharistic liturgy. She concedes that "trinitarian doctrine asserts that relationship is central to the being of God." But while "'Father, Son, and Holy Spirit' has been a primary way in which Christians have named the triune God, many other possibilities exist." She goes on to note that Augustine "pointed out the inadequacy of all trinitarian language" and then quotes from his *On the Trinity*.³⁸ Many of the other essays also cite patristic or medieval authors who either comment on the inadequacy of language to speak properly or fully of God *as God* is or highlight feminine images or names for God.³⁹ But Meyers and the other essayists consistently fail to demonstrate that any of these authors advocated for or believed that the implication of these insights was to dispense with "Father" and "Son" language in public liturgy or in Christian prayer more generally.

Another reason Meyers proffers for the further minimization of the Nicene Creed in eucharistic worship is that, "for many in our contemporary context, the language is impenetrable and a stumbling block."⁴⁰ The fact that, as Meyers also points out, the Nicene Creed

³⁷ Meyers, "Imagining a New Prayer Book."

³⁸ Meyers, "Treasures New and Old," in Meyers and Pettingell, *Gleanings*, 34.

³⁹ See, for example, Richard Norris, "Inclusive Language Liturgies," in Meyers, *How Shall We Pray?*, 28–39.

⁴⁰ Meyers, "Imagining a New Prayer Book."

was not normative in the Roman Rite until the eleventh century simply does not address that we have the weight of thirteen centuries of its use in the eucharist (and many more throughout much of the Christian East) and what it would mean to remove it from use on Sundays and principal feasts. If such a critique could be made of creedal language, is there not a whole slew of other terms that might be equally misleading: priest, altar, sacrifice, Alleluia, *Kyrie eleison*, Israel, Sabbath, repent, sin, Lamb of God, absolve, and so forth. But even more to the point, there is no indication in these essays about how Christians are to determine what speech is most appropriate and necessary for God in public liturgy, at least outside of whether anyone can immediately understand what it means, an ever-moving target. It is noteworthy that nowhere in these essays is there a discussion of catechesis, the essential task of teaching not just the content of Christian faith but also the grammar and vocabulary of that faith, the syntax of our prayer, the invitation which Jesus makes for us to join him in addressing God as "Father," and so on.⁴¹

The reason for this seems to be that Meyers assumes the classical language to be not only culturally confusing but profoundly misguided: "The dominant approach of Western theology for many centuries," Meyers argues, "has been to formulate theories about the immanent Trinity, the relation of Father, Son, and Spirit to each other independent of their relationship to humanity."⁴² Instead, following Catherine LaCugna, Meyers argues that we must begin with the *economic* Trinity, with "God for us." "The *orthodoxy* of theology is not necessarily compliance with dogma," suggests LaCugna, "but *orthodoxa*, literally, right opinion about God's economy."⁴³ Meyers explains this approach in more detail:

From this perspective, what is significant about the triune God is that God's very nature is to be in relationship, both within God's self and with us. In Jesus' use of *abba*, *abba* is

⁴¹ For contemporary theological engagements with the grammar, vocabulary, and language in Christian theology, see Paul L. Holmer, *The Grammar of Faith* (San Francisco, Calif.: Harper and Row, 1978); George Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 1984); and Bruce Marshall, *Trinity and Truth*, Cambridge Studies in Christian Doctrine 3 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

⁴² Meyers, "Principles for Liturgical Language," in Meyers, *How Shall We Pray?*, 91.

⁴³ Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (San Francisco, Calif.: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991), 366.

not an ontological statement about the essence of God, but rather an expression of how God relates to Jesus. . . . We know this relational God through the events of salvation history, in particular through the events of creation, incarnation, and the sending of the Spirit. . . . What seems to be needed is more than a different way to name the Trinity, whether those names are functional or relational. New names are important, but they must be accompanied by a shift in thinking, a shift from a static ontological view of the Trinity to a dynamic relational understanding of the triune God. LaCugna suggests that Christian worship is trinitarian not primarily because it names God as Father, Son, and Spirit, but because worship celebrates the mystery of God's redemptive love for us.⁴⁴

This prompts a number of questions that ultimately relate to the revisions in *EOWI*.

First, there is the assumption that we can distinguish properly between the immanent and economic Trinity. This seems very difficult to know with certainty. Second, Meyers's solution does not address other possible approaches, such as the linguistic turn of theologians like George Lindbeck or Karen Kilby. They suggest at the very least the language of revelation and Creed sets authoritative linguistic and grammatical boundaries. Third, by what criteria can we claim that Jesus' use of *abba* is definitely not ontological, or at least that it does not say something substantially true about God? Such a claim is, in fact, an ontological claim, as is its corollary: that how Jesus relates to the Father (that is, his relationality) is distinct from who each of them are *in se*. Third, by arguing that we can only know God through the economy, it is difficult to see how we can then immediately bracket all of Jesus' own speech to and about the Father, including how Jesus articulates his incarnation, death, resurrection, ascension, and sending of the Spirit *in relationship to the Father*. Is this speech about his activity not also part of the economy? Arguments such as those by Meyers move smoothly from the quite proper acknowledgment that we cannot know God fully nor even approach God's own self-knowledge to the implied denial, as Sarah Coakley puts it, "that God in Godself

⁴⁴ Meyers, "Principles for Liturgical Language," in Meyers, *How Shall We Pray?*, 91–92. At the conclusion of this argument, Meyers cites Catherine Mowry LaCugna, "Making the Most of Trinity Sunday," *Worship* 60.3 (May 1986): 210–212.

can be known *at all*.”⁴⁵ The patristic scholar Frances Young points to Gregory of Nyssa’s careful discussion of how the language of scripture (along with all of God’s actions for us) are “God’s self-accommodation to the limits and constraints of human existence—indeed of human expression.” She argues that “some degree of theological knowledge was made possible” and that “the knowledge that we can gather from the name [of God in scripture] which piety allows us to apply to it, is sufficient for our limited capacity.”⁴⁶ These sets of questions are simply not addressed by Meyers and the other essayists.

Meyers relies extensively on the theologian Catherine LaCugna. Earl Muller, for instance, in an essay-length review of *God for Us* in the *Gregorianum*, argues that in LaCugna’s approach to trinitarian theology, “the discipline” of Christian speech about God “is not determined principally by God but by creatures, specifically human creatures. Theology is done now [by LaCugna] in an anthropological mode, always conditioned by a knowledge that can proceed only from the world, from human experience, to the divine.”⁴⁷ In other words, from the economic to the immanent Trinity. Context, then, becomes the rule by which theological speech can be measured.

LaCugna’s historical scholarship has received serious criticisms. Muller summarizes the concern well: LaCugna presents “an inaccurate understanding of the tradition that on the one hand leads to a mistaken assessment of the development of the doctrine of the Trinity up to the current state of affairs and that on the other hand leads to an overlooking of the considerable resources available in that tradition for accomplishing many of the goals she has set for herself.”⁴⁸ The work of some of the respected voices in historical theology of this period—such as Michel Barnes, Lewis Ayres, Sarah Coakley, and Khaled Anatolios—make it clear that the historical work of scholars like LaCugna, Virginia Burrus, and Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza fails to set the christological and trinitarian debates in their true historical context. For example, Michel Barnes summarizes the kind of improper

⁴⁵ Sarah Coakley, *God, Sexuality, and the Self: An Essay ‘On the Trinity’* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 46. Coakley firmly rejects such a claim.

⁴⁶ Frances M. Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 140–141. Nyssa discusses this in detail in *Contra Eunomium*, Book II.

⁴⁷ Earl Muller, “The Science of Theology: A Review of Catherine LaCugna’s *God for Us*,” *Gregorianum* 75.2 (January 1994): 311–341.

⁴⁸ Muller, “The Science of Theology,” 312.

use of Augustine that is widespread in modern theology work (such as Meyers's earlier use of the quotation from *On the Trinity*):

I have argued that contemporary systematic appropriations of Augustine are based on methods and accounts that are preselected for mirroring a widely held hermeneutic or ideology of systematic theology. These methods and accounts typically include an unconscious dependence on de Régnon, a tendency toward a logic of ideas, including a list (operative even when unfulfilled) for encyclopedic comprehensiveness at the conceptual level coupled with a reductive use of primary sources, a retreat from the polemical genre, with an emphasis on the philosophical content of dogma.⁴⁹

In fact, the work of historical theologians is nowhere to be seen in these preparatory essays. Nor do we hear the voice of systematic theologians like Kathryn Tanner, who firmly rejects the claim that Christian trinitarian doctrine is "the product of arcane theological speculation beyond the biblical witness." A careful reading of the patristic writers tells us just the opposite. "By returning to these first few centuries," Tanner argues, we can see "how what came to be authoritative Christian teaching about the Trinity involved the convergence of biblical interpretation and theological pressures fundamental to Christian concerns about salvation in Christ."⁵⁰

The problems with LaCugna's approach are not only historical. Muller characterizes LaCugna's trinitarian theology as "oscillating between modalism and Arianism."⁵¹ LaCugna also claims that "Father" did not really designate the Father's relationship of begetting the Son until the fourth century, a rather strange claim in light of some obvious biblical passages to the contrary (such as Galatians 4:4 and John 1:13), let alone a host of patristic sources.⁵² LaCugna also contends that "Father" originally connoted only a relationship to *creation* with

⁴⁹ Michel Barnes, "Augustine in Contemporary Trinitarian Theology," *Theological Studies* 56.2 (1995): 250.

⁵⁰ Kathryn Tanner, "The Trinity as Christian Teaching," in Emery and Levering, *The Oxford Handbook of the Trinity*, 349.

⁵¹ Muller, "The Science of Theology," 313. He discusses this in detail from pages 331–339.

⁵² LaCugna, *God for Us*, 60.

which the Son is necessary interconnected. The implication of such a claim is startling: God is not triune *apart from creation*.

The patristic scholar Khaled Anatolios offers a provocative reading of Athanasius in *Retrieving Nicaea*. Athanasius is concerned with the lofty titles “attributed to him [Jesus] in Scripture, such as Word, Wisdom, Power, Light, Life, and so on.” Like many patristic writers, he pressed into the very tensions afforded us by the scriptural language. These titles are, for Athanasius (like we saw earlier in Nyssa), at the same time *paradeigmata* (that is, “symbols”) that nonetheless “grant us genuine insight into divine being.” Their purpose is a sort of divine pedagogy, offered “in order to structure our conception of the divine: ‘Since human nature is not capable of comprehension of God, Scripture has placed before us such symbols (*paradeigmata*) and such images (*eikōnas*), so that we may understand from them, however slightly and obscurely, as much as is accessible to us.’”⁵³ Athanasius expresses the same sort of reticence as Meyers about our ability to describe God *as God is*. But where he diverges from Meyers and LaCugna is significant. Athanasius works from “the fundamental conviction that the Scriptures are really revelatory of God.” This revelation necessarily occurs in part “by the mutual interrelatedness of biblical texts,” a fact that legitimates “the meaningfulness of its intertextual relations.” In Athanasius’s logic, “the scriptural naming of God must mirror, in a way accommodated to human understanding, the being of God.”⁵⁴ In contrast, for Meyers and *EOWI*, the scriptural naming of God is but a metaphor. And given the right contextual factors, these metaphors become *de facto* disposable.

Conclusion

This article has addressed the ambiguous trinitarian theology in the eucharistic portions of *Enriching Our Worship 1* considered as a whole rite, as well as the logic that undergirds its gender-neutral composition. This ambiguity not only concerns whether this rite is explicitly trinitarian but, even if so, whether it expresses “the Trinitarian and Christological formulations which we, as Anglicans, regard as normative and the ground of our common prayer” (*EOWI*, 5–6). The absence of the scriptural language of relation and procession

⁵³ Quoted in Khaled Anatolios, *Retrieving Nicaea: The Development and Meaning of Trinitarian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2011), 110.

⁵⁴ Anatolios, *Retrieving Nicaea*, 111.

make such a judgment nearly impossible. One of the principal tensions that I have shown is between the stated principle regarding the centrality of "Father," "Son," and "Lord" language ensconced in the Nicene Creed and Lord's Prayer and the fact that *EOWI* allows for the omission of both (similar to how the *Gloria in excelsis* is always optional in the 1979 BCP).⁵⁵ Further, Meyers and others have argued on contextual and historical grounds for the further marginalization of the Nicene Creed in eucharistic worship. Hilary of Poitiers articulates what would be the assumption of almost every patristic writer regarding the scriptures: "God is to be believed when he speaks of himself, and whatever he grants us to think concerning himself is to be followed."⁵⁶ Yet, the argumentation for these revisions has moved immediately to the contextual concerns, legitimate as they may be. Furthermore, these arguments presented by Meyers and the other essayists offer little serious engagement with scriptural scholarship that argues textually for the centrality of "Father" and "Son" language, or with the major patristic and medieval authors who consider many of the concerns raised and who offer equally serious responses.

There are two more factors that need to be considered in this approach to gender-neutral language for Christian eucharistic praying. The first is the wider cultural and theological context in which these liturgies would be celebrated. I suggest that this context makes this trinitarian opacity all the more pastorally dangerous. The contemporary American context is one that exhibits a profound ignorance of basic Christian theology. In fact, most people's working assumptions about God resemble none of the monotheistic religions. A theologically hazy liturgy for people who are functionally Moralistic Therapeutic Deists (from sociologist Christian Smith⁵⁷) is a recipe for something less than Christian worship. I was not able to find one essay in the volumes related to the Episcopal Church's liturgical revision that suggested a pastoral, catechetical response to the quite legitimate concerns that could arise as a result of the masculine scriptural and conciliar language for God.

Second, the very existence of *EOWI* raises further questions about the act of making liturgical choices. This matter was raised in

⁵⁵ Meyers, "Treasures New and Old," in Meyers and Pettingell, *Gleanings*, 32.

⁵⁶ Hilary of Poitiers, *De Trinitate* IV, 14; quoted in Marshall, *Trinity and Truth*, 15.

⁵⁷ Christian Smith, *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 162–163.

earnest by the 1979 BCP, which presented a host of liturgical choices to the parish priest without providing any criteria by which one is to choose among options. *EWI* pushes this to a whole new level. What are laudable or suspect reasons for choosing to incorporate some, all, or none of the aspects of this resource into public worship? The ways the *Enriching Our Worship* liturgies are defended in the collections of essays usually assumes that its revisions of God-language are imperative ones. And yet each priest and bishop is left to make this decision without any reference to other parishes or dioceses, inside or outside the Episcopal Church. Until we address the theological and ecclesiological issues embedded in the practice of individually choosing this or that rite without any shared criteria, we need to put a pause on liturgical revision.

Let me be clear: I do not wish to imply in any way that the SCLM is trying to introduce a new trinitarian theology. Rather, the issue in *EWI* is that its concerns with the implications of gendered language for God have eclipsed all other concerns, including how to ensure that this liturgy retains a substantial coherence to the conciliar trinitarian speech of which we are inheritors. The disconnect between the scriptural and conciliar language and the wide-reaching implications of these revisions in trinitarian theology, Christology, soteriology, and beyond is striking. If one wants to know what a group or community believes most centrally, "the first place to look is not in a book," Bruce Marshall argues, "but at what a community *does*—including, of course, the way it talks."⁵⁸ Whatever its intentions, *EWI* speaks a *de facto* different trinitarian theology than our trinitarian and christological formulations. Language like "Wisdom" and "Word" for Jesus, and the maternal imagery in scripture, need not be foreign to our public liturgy. But it cannot increase at the expense of the terms by which Jesus invites us to join him in praying, "Our Father."

⁵⁸ Marshall, *Trinity and Truth*, 18.

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