

THE GENERIC USE OF THE WORD 'MAN' (1987)

(M.7. Agenda 1986)

The Teddington (3/9) Circuit Meeting (Present:35. Vote:22 for, 4 against, 9 neutral) whilst welcoming the initiative of the Conference in this matter, requests the Conference to re-examine the list of proposed amendments to the Methodist Service Book which were published with a view to reducing the generic uses of the word 'Man'. The main point of the Memorial is that many of the alterations result in clumsy English and poor theology.

1. Some important instances of the generic use of the word 'Man' have not been included; e.g in the Collect for the 9th Sunday before Christmas (page C3). Even though this may be an ecumenical text, it is basic to the whole exercise.
2. In some instances the proposed amendment does not have the same meaning as the word altered: (a) 'Neighbours' on page B5 may seem to refer only to a few people who live nearby. Not every worshipper will immediately think of Luke 10. (b) In this usage 'man' included children. 'Man and Woman' is not necessarily an adequate alternative: e.g On Page B26 six lines from the bottom, it could well be argued that children stand in need of justice quite as much as men and women. (c) In the Ordination Service to alter 'mankind' on page G12 to 'Creation' is to enormously extend the presbyter's office well beyond that recognised elsewhere in the Christian Church.
3. (a) In some amendments the English usage is less than happy. 'Us male and female' is clumsy; 'all people' seems awkward in certain contexts (B7, 21 and 24).
(b) The generic 'man' includes all generations in a way none of the alternatives necessarily does.
(c) The Circuit Meeting suggests the use of the word 'everyone' may be an acceptable alternative in certain places.

Finally, this meeting asks the Conference to clarify what is intended by the phrase (in the Conference resolution of 1984) 'next' re-print of the Methodist Service Books? Does this phrase mean the next time the Methodist Publishing House re-orders from its printers, or is some more extensive revision envisaged in several years time?

REPLY

The Faith and Order Committee reaffirms its commitment to the revision of the liturgy in the interest of promoting inclusive language, and after careful consideration of the various points raised by the Teddington Circuit accepts the force of much of the argument presented. The difficult nature of the task of finding appropriate, elegant forms of expression which are theologically adequate is well illustrated in the Memorial.

The Faith and Order Committee therefore recommends that the specific points raised under headings 2 and 3 be considered together with any other suggested

amendments when the Methodist Service Book is revised. In relation to the alteration of ecumenical texts the Faith and Order Committee continues to recommend that changes are made only after consultation with the Joint Liturgical Group and the English Language Liturgical Consultation, whose concerns are akin to those expressed in the Memorial.

In view of the financial outlay involved in the making of slight changes in the text of services, and general undesirability of wholesale alteration in successive reprints of what is basically the same edition of the Service Book, the kind of amendments needed must await the major revision envisaged for the mid-1990's.

RESOLUTION

That the Conference adopts the Reply to M.7 (1986).

(Agenda 1987, pp.646-648)

In place of the above resolution, the Conference resolved that the reply of the Conference to Memorial M.7 (1986) was contained in its own Resolutions. The Conference further resolved to refer to the Faith and Order Committee the resolution with which the next report, 'Inclusive Language', begins.