

Sibyls' Service

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Welcome

Come to me, all who labour and are heavy laden,
and I will give you rest (Matthew 11:28)

(Music download link: <http://www.gkc.org.uk/Aldates>)

Gloria

Glory to God in the highest,
and peace to his people on earth.

Lord God, heavenly King,
almighty God and Father,
we worship you, we give you thanks,
we praise you for your glory.

Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father,
Lord God, Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world:
have mercy on us;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father:
receive our prayer.

For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High,
Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

Confession

Most merciful God,
we confess that we have sinned against you
in thought, word, and deed,
by what we have done,
and by what we have left undone.
We have not loved you with our whole heart;
we have not loved our neighbours as ourselves.
We are truly sorry and we humbly repent.
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,
have mercy on us and forgive us;
that we may delight in your will,
and walk in your ways,
to the glory of your Name. Amen.

Absolution

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves,
and the truth is not in us

If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just,
and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Psalm 130

Out of the depths I cry to you, O LORD.

Lord, hear my voice!

Let your ears be attentive to the voice
of my supplications!

If you, O LORD, should mark iniquities,
Lord, who could stand?

But there is forgiveness with you,
so that you may be revered.

I wait for the LORD, my soul waits,
and in his word I hope;

my soul waits for the Lord

more than those who watch for the morning,
more than those who watch for the morning.

O Israel, hope in the LORD!

For with the LORD there is steadfast love,
and with him is great power to redeem.

It is he who will redeem Israel from
all its iniquities.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever.
Amen.

Transgender Theology

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth...

God in Hebrew is *Elohim* which is plural. The Trinity is hinted at in the very first verse of the Bible.

God is love (1 Jn 4:8,16)

There are personal relationships at the heart of the Godhead.

Then God said, 'Let us make humankind in our image,...' So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

Male and female are specifically mentioned in the creation of humankind in the image of God.

But does Gen 1:27 really mean that God created a gender binary which consists of male and female and nothing else, and is fixed and immutable?

Transgender Theology

In the context of the rest of Gen 1, Gen 1:27 is the crowning merism in a whole sequence of merisms (“Merism”, noun, a rhetorical device or figure of speech in which a combination of two contrasting parts of the whole refer to the whole). An example of a merism is Rev 22:13 where Jesus is “the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last”. “The Alpha and the Omega” is a way of referring to the whole alphabet, “the first and the last” means that Jesus was involved in the whole of creation, not just the beginning and the end.

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth And everything in between: the whole universe.

God said ” Let there be light!” And there was light. And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night.

So God made the light and the darkness and the evening and the morning and the twilight and the dawn, the sunset and the sunrise and all the infinite gradations of light and shade in between.

... and so on

Transgender Theology

So when we get to: “So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.” this is one more merism.

So God made the male and female the intersex and the nonbinary, the transgender, agender, bigender, gender fluid and everything in between.

God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good.

God the Father uses male pronouns

Jesus uses male pronouns

What about the Holy Spirit?

Transgender Theology

In Hebrew, the word *ruach*, meaning wind/breath/spirit, is feminine. So the Holy Spirit is feminine. In Hebrew, verbs are gendered according to their subject, so whenever the Holy Spirit is described as doing something, the feminine form of the verb is used. This occurs in about 75 places in the OT.

For example: “The Spirit of God (*Ruach Elohim*), she-came-upon Saul...” (1 Samuel 11:6), “The Spirit of the LORD (*Ruach Yahweh*) she-came mightily upon David from that day forward,” (1 Samuel 16:13)

Some people dismiss this argument by saying “Its only grammatical gender, it doesn’t mean anything”. But as someone with a high view of the Bible, I am reluctant to say that any part of it (let alone, 75 or more distinct parts) “doesn’t mean anything”!

The New Testament is written in Greek and the Greek word for wind/breath/spirit is *pneuma* and is neutral and uses neuter pronouns. But the earliest translation of the NT was into the Syriac language, which is variant of Aramaic, and in which the word for Spirit is *Ruha* and is feminine. Up to 400AD the Holy Spirit was virtually always treated as feminine in Syriac Christian literature.

So, the Holy Spirit uses she/her/they/them pronouns, she seems to be gender fluid. All genders are therefore represented in the Godhead.

Transgender Theology

Note: In 1 Kings 18, King Ahab wants to get hold of Elijah. Elijah meets Ahab's servant Obediah and tells him to go and tell Ahab that Elijah is here. Obediah is afraid that Elijah will be whisked away while he is gone and he will get into trouble. He says "As soon as I have gone from you, the spirit of the LORD (Ruach Yahweh) will carry you I know not where; so, when I come and tell Ahab and he cannot find you, he will kill me, although I your servant have revered the LORD from my youth."

In this place the verb "will carry you" is masculine. Perhaps this is simply because Obediah is not talking about the (feminine) Holy Spirit but about a "wind from Yahweh". Because the action is being carried out by (masculine) Yahweh using a (feminine) wind, and not being carried out by the (feminine) Holy Spirit, the verb takes the masculine form rather than the feminine.

Whatever the exact reason, this verse shows that the writers are not compelled by the Hebrew grammar to use feminine verb forms with the word Ruach, so it seems to be a deliberate choice.

Transgender Theology

Some people use the argument that God does not have a body (“God is spirit” Jn 4:24) and therefore God is genderless, but as we have seen: God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are all gendered. A mind can have a gender while a body can have a sex.

Human beings consist of a mind and a body. So humans have both gender (a property of the mind) and sex (a property of the body).

In most people, their gender identity and sexual body characteristics are aligned: they are cisgender.

For some people the gender they identify as differs from their sex, and this discongruity causes dysphoria.

In this case, how should we resolve the discongruity? Which should take precedence, the mind (gender) or the body (sex)?

Theologically, we know that, while man looks on the outward appearance, God looks on the heart (“heart” and “mind” are often synonymous in the Bible):

“Do not look on his appearance . . . for the LORD does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart”

1 Sam 16:7

Transgender Theology

“For a person is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is true circumcision something external and physical. Rather, a person is a Jew who is one inwardly, and real circumcision is a matter of the heart it is spiritual and not literal. Such a person receives praise not from others but from God.” Rom 2:28–29

“so that you may be able to answer those who boast in outward appearance and not in the heart.” 2 Cor 5:12

Our physical body is mortal, perishable and temporary and will be transformed and replaced at the resurrection by a new, immortal, imperishable, eternal body:

“What is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable... It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body... this perishable body must put on imperishability, and this mortal body must put on immortality.” (1 Cor 15)

Scientifically, while the body can be adjusted and modified to fit a person’s gender identity, their gender identity is fixed and any attempt to change it (to fit the sex they were assigned at birth) can be harmful.

Certain parts of the body (such as the brain) actually align more closely with gender than sex. This is not surprising, given the close interaction between the mind and the brain.

Transgender Theology

As it turns out, the white matter in three key regions of the brains of transgender men was more similar to that in brains of cisgender men than that in brains of cisgender women. Similarly, the white matter in four regions of the brains of transgender women was more similar to that in brains of cisgender women than that in brains of cisgender men. It's important to note that both of these studies were done on transgender people before they had any kind of hormone therapy.

Transgender people have neurological traits of the gender they identify as, rather than that they are assigned at birth. Neurobiology is a *far* more reliable measure of who a person is than their genitals.

“For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.” Eph 2:10

So, science and theology are aligned on this question.

Ballad Of The Albatross

Ballad Of The Albatross
by Karen Bishop

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She crouched upon the beach in twilight gloom

Bedraggled dove, despairing and alone.

There came a flash of white wings overhead

“Seabird I’m lonely, stay with me” she said.

He settled down beside her on the sand

And told her traveller’s tales of sea and land

“I wish that I was free, like you” she sighed

“But I’m a prisoner here of wind and tide.

“The air I loved grew rough and drove me down

It tore my wings and left me here to drown.

I long to find my home across the sea.

But dare not trust these wings to carry me.”

Ballad Of The Albatross

Ballad Of The Albatross

by Karen Bishop

He laughed and rose, his mighty wings outspread
“Come, look at me, I know your wounds” he said.
He showed her jagged scars, healed tough and strong
That gave him surer wings to fly upon.

“If you will rise and travel on with me,
I’ll teach you how to ride the storm” said he.
Trembling she stood and fought the fear inside
“Yes, I will fly, if you will be my Guide” .

And close beside him, higher she flew and higher,
Into the eastern skies ablaze with fire.
The little shadow and the mighty one
Heading for home beneath the rising sun.

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