

Letters to the Editor

Inclusive Language Important

Dear Editor,

I am writing this in response to the letter that Ron Peterson wrote in the March 9 issue of the Lance, concerning the SAGE 222 syllabus' use of the [sic] after "Essay on Man." I would like to say that I agree with Ron in that I, too, believe that the sexes are equal and that we do need to work together, and not against each other.

In the letter to the editor, it was pointed out that the [sic] was placed after the title of Pope's essay, but not after the one called "The Woman Troubadors, by Julian of Norwich. In my understanding, this was not done to indicate that the word "man" is bad and "woman" is not. Rather, the two writings were addressing

different things. The authors of the SAGE 222 syllabus meant to point out that Pope's essay was actually about humanity, not man, and thus the [sic] indicated for it to be read as such. The writing by Julian of Norwich, on the other hand, was specifically

about women, so there was no need to indicate any differently. Still, there is the contention that the choice of the title is the author's prerogative, and we have no right to say that it is wrong for our times. I disagree.

I realize that many of the people who use exclusive language do not intend to exclude women, because in their minds the word "man" does mean "humanity." But, it is important to understand that in this changing society, many other people, such as myself, do not hold that meaning for the word "man." The purpose of language is communication, and when speaking or writing, we should try to use words that will communicate ideas to the people being addressed. If it is known that many women do feel excluded when the term "man" is used, and a person is addressing women as well as men, in order to effectively communicate, the attempt should be made to respect those women and use words that share a common meaning to all con-

cerned. I, for one, appreciate the conscious effort that the SAGE 222 team is making to communicate with words that do share a common meaning to all of us being addressed.

Language is the primary way that humans communicate with each other, and naturally as people change over the centuries, so does language. Therefore, in order to effectively communicate ideas from earlier times in history, it is sometimes necessary to alter the language somewhat so that it can be applied to contemporary times. The intent is not to change what the author is saying, or to say that what the author wrote is wrong. Rather, it is an attempt to better convey the meaning of the author in language fits our time, so that the message is better understood and more applicable to today. Even so, I am sure that many people today would contend that the word "man" is applicable to our time. I do not feel that this is the case.

Language is very powerful and influential in shaping the mind-

sets and images in a person, both on the conscious and unconscious level. Every time exclusive language is used, regardless of whether the person using it means for it to be exclusive, it reinforces the image and mindset of male superiority. Our society is in the midst of changing from a patriarchal mindset to one of equality for the sexes. Inclusive language is a vital part of being able to complete that transition. Until we, as a society, realize that the word "man" does not mean "humanity," we will continue to promote the mindset of an earlier time, even if our actions state otherwise. True, it is the author's prerogative to title a work as he or she chooses. However, it is our prerogative, as readers, to change a word when we read it, in order to be able to apply the reading to ourselves. And, it is certainly the SAGE 222 team's right to make a formal statement that the word "man" is inapplicable to our time, therefore informing the women in SAGE 222 that we are indeed included in who they, as professors, are addressing.

Cindy Cushman

Ideas About Forum Discussed

At Wednesday night's student forum, one issue addressed, as expected, was the chaplain situation. It appears that the overwhelming majority of people expressing opinions on this topic would prefer that the plan of

interim chaplains, with a new one every year, be forsaken. This is probably due partly to our desire to build a good rapport with our chaplain, something not easy to do with a person who will only hold the position for one year. I think we are also, on the whole, quite satisfied with our present chaplain, and see her as a good person to build this relationship with, rather than starting over next Fall with someone we do not know. Getting 250+ signatures on the petition relating to this issue may have been one

thing to strengthen our position in this debate, but as was pointed out in Tuesday morning's Bible Study meeting, having President Reuschling come to Vespers Sunday night, and seeing only five students there, most likely was not. There is nothing wrong with saying how we feel, but I don't think it is as effective as SHOWING how we feel.

Something else to come up Wednesday evening was the threat of students' well-being and safety on campus, coming from people outside the St. Andrews community. When this was brought to the attention of Security Chief Theiron Young, he stressed the importance of contacting security immediately when we feel that our rights to privacy, and/or safety have been, or may be, violated, rather than

tending to other small details first. Now if that detail happens to be questioning the person involved tactfully, but firmly, as to just why she or he is here, that is probably a good idea. Otherwise, according to Young, a few minutes can make-indeed, has made- the difference between getting to the bottom of a problem and have the matter pass unresolved.

Christopher Wood

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-M.A.R.

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