

The Loss of a Common Language: The End of Ecumenical-Liturgical Convergence?

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I am, indeed, both honored and grateful to be able to present this lecture in honor of the late Father Aidan Kavanagh, from whose many writings, especially, in my case, those on Christian initiation, I have learned such a great deal. Today's lecture, I hope, is reflective of the Kavanagh critical and passionate spirit, which he brought to bear on a wide range of liturgical topics. On April 21, 2005, I had the privilege of presenting the annual lecture in honor of another great Benedictine scholar, Godfrey Diekmann, O.S.B., at Saint John's Abbey and University, Collegeville, Minnesota. Father Godfrey, like Father Aidan, was indeed a mover and shaker in the world of post-Vatican II liturgical reform and renewal. In that lecture¹ I drew attention to the fact that, as we stand on this side of the liturgical reforms and renewal of the Second Vatican Council and the similar reforms that have taken place in so many churches since the 1960s and 70s, we are the recipients of a rich liturgical-ecumenical heritage and treasure that has shaped all of us, both directly and indirectly. In addition to pointing to several now common characteristics or goals of what is generally agreed across denominational boundaries should take place in Christian worship, I drew special attention both to the three-year lectionary, the Roman Catholic *Ordo Lectionum Missae*; since 1969 this has been adapted and used in various versions, the most recent being the *Revised Common Lectionary* of 1992; and, not least throughout the English-speaking world, to what has become the gift of a common liturgical language:

Thanks to the liturgical texts produced by the now much maligned, International Commission on English in the Liturgy (better known by its abbreviation, ICEL), together with the International Commission on English Texts and the English Language Liturgical Consultation, English-speaking Christians throughout the world use essentially the same texts for what we used to call the "Ordinary of the Mass:" i.e., Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, Sanctus, and Agnus Dei, together with the dialogical responses and/or other acclamations of the Liturgy. This, of course, has meant that Christians from one tradition might easily worship in another even without the need to have a text in their hands! ("Liturgy and Ecumenism," 5-6).

On June 15, 2006, however, the Roman Catholic bishops of the United States voted by the overwhelming margin of 173 to 29 to accept the newly prepared English translation of the *Ordo Missae* from the 2002 *editio typica tertia* of the *Missale Romanum* of Paul VI.² In one fell swoop they have brought to an end this common liturgical language in the English-speaking world, at least as far as Roman Catholicism goes. The seeds of this liturgical-linguistic demise, of course, go back to the 2001 Vatican instruction *Liturgiam Authenticam*, which called for a more literal, rather than a dynamically equivalent, approach to the translation of Latin liturgical texts into vernacular languages.³

With regard to ecumenism in particular, this instruction is quite telling. The following statement is a clear repudiation of the work of ICEL over the past forty plus years, and English-speaking ecumenical liturgical cooperation in general: "Great caution is to be taken to avoid a wording or style that the Catholic faithful would confuse with the manner of speech of non-Catholic ecclesial communities or of other religions, so that such a factor will not cause them confusion

or discomfort” (ibid., 40, p. 135).

Now, just what might this be? Here even a little knowledge of history can be of immense help. If the translation of the *Ordo Missae* is any indication of this principle, then “the manner of speech of non-Catholic ecclesial communities” must be that of liturgical greeting and response (e.g., “and also with you” as the response to “the Lord be with you”) as well as the English texts of the Gloria, Credo, Sanctus, and Agnus Dei, since these are now being rendered in a word for word equivalent translation. But these very texts in their earlier form appeared in the approved English translation of the Missal of Paul VI in 1970, and in subsequent editions. The *Lutheran Book of Worship*, which employs similar texts, did not appear until 1978, and the American Episcopal *Book of Common Prayer*, Rite II, which does the same, came in 1979, while the worship books of other churches appeared either at the same time or subsequently. That is, “the manner of speech of non-Catholic ecclesial communities” – their liturgical language – is based directly on Catholic liturgical speech as it is adapted directly from already existing Catholic liturgical speech! It is not and simply could not have been the other way around, even if for Roman Catholics ecumenical consultation had been a part of the process. Of course, the instruction’s “great caution” will now become self-fulfilling since the only Christian Churches using the ICEL texts will be those in the English-speaking Protestant world. Ironically, then, the former Roman Catholic ICEL texts will now become the “manner of [liturgical] speech of non-Catholic ecclesial communities” alone.

The Translation of the Ordo Missae

Criticism of this new translation of the *Ordo Missae* as somehow not being a faithful translation of the Latin texts of the *Missale Romanum* of Paul VI would be difficult. It is certainly that, even if it tends toward an excessive literalism. Staying here in this essay with the texts of the Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, Sanctus, and Agnus Dei, together with the dialogical responses and/or other acclamations, there is no question but that the principles of *Liturgiam Authenticam* have been closely followed.⁴ For example, the response “et cum spiritu tuo” to the greeting “Dominus vobiscum” or “Pax vobiscum,” as in most Romance language editions of the *Missale Romanum*,⁵ is translated again into English as “and with your spirit.” Whether “et cum spiritu tuo” is a circumlocution or Semitism for “and also with you” is a debatable issue; the Latin could have simply used something like “et tecum” to say “and also with you,” but it does not.⁶ In addition, the Latin text of the Confiteor, which has always retained the traditional “mea culpa, mea culpa, mea maxima culpa,” and is also literally translated in most Romance language editions of the *Missale Romanum*,⁷ now restores to English Roman Catholic liturgical speech as well “through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault.” Similarly, the translation of the Gloria in Excelsis no longer glosses over “Laudamus te, benedicimus te, adoramus te, glorificamus te, gratias agimus tibi propter magnam gloria tuam” with “we worship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glory,” but now renders each phrase in the text into equivalent English. The opening biblical quotation, “Gloria in excelsis Deo, et in terra pax hominibus bonae voluntatis” – now “Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to people of good will” instead of “Glory to God in the highest and peace to his people on earth” – is actually more inclusive than before. I find little to fault here.

The new translation of the Nicene Creed – beginning with the required change from “We

believe” to “I believe” as the literal translation of the opening word “Credo” – is of particular interest. In his recent excellent study Peter Jeffery has characterized the problems with this translation as follows:

“The Creed is to be translated according to the precise wording that the tradition of the Latin Church has bestowed upon it, including the use of the first person singular.” ... *LA [Liturgiam Authenticam]* seems to be saying that, not only the Roman rite, but the broader Latin church as a whole shares a uniform tradition in favor of “I believe,” as if “We believe” were essentially an Eastern tradition. But this is simply untrue. The original texts of the so-called “Nicene Creed,” as published by the early ecumenical councils, began “We believe,” as reported in numerous Latin and Greek sources. The plural “we” form was cited by Pope Leo the Great, and in early collections of canon law, some of which even begin with the words, “The faith of the Romans,” or “Here begins the faith of the Catholic Roman Church: We believe in one God...” The Mozarabic rite of Spain, the best-documented Latin liturgical tradition after the Roman, has always said “We believe,” both before and after Vatican II. Even in the Roman Mass there was a minority tradition that used “Credimus” instead of “Credo.” Melodies with this form of the text are preserved in manuscripts of the eleventh and twelfth centuries; one of them is even in the currently authorized chant books ... The Eastern churches, too, use both forms. The Coptic, Ethiopian, Chaldean and Armenian rites stay closer to the conciliar originals with “We believe,” but the ancient Greek liturgies of Byzantium, Jerusalem, and Egypt use “I believe.” In the West Syrian rite, at one time, the priest said “We” while the people said “I.”⁸

In other words, no matter how one might view the translation issues regarding “et cum spiritu tuo” and the Gloria in Excelsis, an argument based on “the precise wording that the tradition of the Latin Church has bestowed upon it” is a difficult one to sustain. This is especially so if we consider historically that the recitation of the Nicene Creed in the Mass, as is well known, came from outside the Roman liturgical tradition in the first place.

Further on Jeffery draws our attention to another credal anomaly in the 2002 *Missale Romanum*, this time the addition of the word “unum” to the opening statement in the Latin text of the *Apostles’ Creed*: “Credo in *unum* Deum.” He writes:

Since it emerged in the context of the Roman baptismal rite and has no exact Eastern counterpart, the *Apostles’ Creed* is unarguably a core text of the Roman liturgical tradition. For centuries it has begun *Credo in Deum*, “I believe in God,” a reading preserved even after Vatican II in the Missal of Paul VI, the Rite of Christian Initiation, and the Catechism of the Catholic Church. Yet in the new *Missale Romanum* of 2002 we find it beginning *Credo in unum Deum*, “I believe in *one* God”—a variant with far less historical precedent in the *Apostles’ Creed* than “Credimus” has in the Nicene Creed. Unless the CDW [Congregation for Divine Worship] identifies this as an error and issues a correction, then, translators will find themselves in an absurd position: We may *not* use the plural “We believe” opening, despite all its conciliar and liturgical precedent in East and West, because *LA* asserts that doing so would violate the Latin liturgical tradition. But we *must* translate the *Apostles’ Creed* with “I believe in one God” because . . . well, because the authorities have seen fit to alter the

ancient text, in opposition to Roman tradition.... Unfortunately this case is no fluke.⁹

The now approved January 2006 translation of the *Ordo Missae* has corrected this error, with a note indicating that this has been checked out with the CDW.¹⁰ Ironically, the result now is that the English text reads correctly “I believe in God,” while the authoritative Latin text, the *editio typica* to which all vernacular translations must adhere, remains in error, at least for the present.

The use of “I believe” or “We believe” is not the only issue in the translation of the Creed. Is “visible and invisible” really that much of an improvement over “seen and unseen,” or “consubstantial with the Father” over “one in being with the Father,” or – in reference to the Holy Spirit – “with the Father and Son is adored and glorified” over “worshiped and glorified,” or “confess one baptism for the forgiveness of sins” over “acknowledge one baptism?” And are these “improvements” so important that they really require that such changes be made in texts that people recite from memory? And what about the phrase “et unam, sanctam, catholicam, et apostolicam Ecclesiam”? This has consistently been translated into English, both before and after Vatican II, as “in one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church,” a translation that any pre-Vatican II Latin-English Missal will confirm at a glance.¹¹ This is, like “Credimus,” part of the ancient conciliar Greek and Latin texts of the Creed,¹² occurring as such even in the ancient *Gelasian Sacramentary*, a document that has become so important in the modern reform of the Roman Catholic rites of Christian initiation.¹³ The removal of “in” from the translation, while demanded by literalism and conformity to the current Latin text, is itself an innovation in the long-standing tradition of English—and even Latin – creedal language.

Doctrinally as well, I have difficulty seeing how an argument can be made suggesting that these changes in the wording of the Creed are all that necessary. Indeed, they seem to be needlessly tinkering with the way people have professed their faith for the past forty years. With regard to the phrase “consubstantial with the Father,” the bishops have requested that the U. S. translation be allowed to remain “one in being with the Father.” Not even the bishops see the doctrinally charged “consubstantial” to be an important enough doctrinal term to necessitate its verbatim inclusion in the text.

The development of the soon to be current translation of the Preface Dialogue, especially the “Sursum corda,” is nothing short of baffling. The attempt to render “Sursum corda. Habemus ad Dominum” as “Let our hearts be lifted high; we hold them to the Lord,” the reading of the first draft translation, is no more literal, and not much better, than what a first-year Latin student might translate as “Up your hearts. We have them to the Lord.” But at least here wiser heads prevailed, and the earlier translation, “Lift up your hearts. We lift them up to the Lord,” has remained. Of equal interest is the fact that “Gratias agamus Domino Deo nostro. Dignum et iustum est,” is now to be rendered as “Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. It is right and just.” Again, there is no problem here with the translation as translation, and certainly this has parallels today in almost all Romance language translations. One is left wondering again, however, why it was considered necessary to change this from “It is right to give him [or even “our”] thanks and praise,” a phrase that says the same thing. “It is right and just” is more inclusive than “it is right to give him our thanks and praise,” but the longer phrase is much more

easily adapted to the traditional Gregorian chant tone of the Preface Dialogue – that is, one does not have to abridge the chant musically when using the longer phrase.

Moving on from the Dialogue, the translation of the first line of the Sanctus is particularly puzzling: “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God of hosts.” Quite simply, there is no *est* in the Latin text of the Sanctus, just as there is no use of *est*, the third person singular form of *eimi*, in the Greek liturgical tradition of the Sanctus (i.e., *hagios, hagios, hagios, Kyrios Theos sabaoth*¹⁴), nor does *est* appear in the Septuagint text of Isaiah 6. Hence the addition of “is,” as in “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God of hosts,” is not only a departure from how the Latin text of the Sanctus has always been translated into English, but this actually adds a word that is neither in the Latin text itself, nor in the wider liturgical tradition. Such a word, of course, may be implied, as ICEL claims in a footnote, by the fact that both *Dominus* and *Deus* are nominatives and not vocatives. In fact, in the Spanish translation used by Roman Catholics in Mexico, and currently in the United States, the Sanctus does become; “Santo, santo, santo es el Señor, Dios del universo.”¹⁵ But the very next phrase, “pleni sunt caeli et terra gloria tua” (“heaven and earth are full of *your* glory”), certainly suggests that *Dominus* and *Deus* are to be taken as the object of “Holy” and so should govern how the triple Sanctus is itself translated. Interestingly enough, in the Greek Liturgy of Saint James (coming from the ancient Jerusalem liturgical tradition) the nominative form of *kyrios*, which occurs in the first line of the Sanctus in most Greek liturgies, becomes there the vocative *kurie* (*hagios, hagios, hagios, Kurie Theos sabaoth*)¹⁶ in order to underscore that the Sanctus is sung precisely to the Lord God of Sabaoth! It is also not uncommon in the Latin West, in versions of the Sanctus in the Mozarabic liturgical tradition, that after the Benedictus the text adds in transliterated Greek, “Hagios, Hagios, Hagios, Kyrie ho Theos,” again with *Kyrie* in the vocative.¹⁷ Quite frankly, I would have much rather seen here the retention of the great, evocative, and untranslatable word *Sabaoth* in the English version rather than the adding of an *est*, which simply is not, and to my knowledge has never been, in the Latin text.

While an earlier draft version of the Agnus Dei translated the relative clause “qui tollis peccata mundi” literally as “who take away,” the approved version remains “Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world.” This is about the only complete liturgical text that is not changed from the previous ICEL text in this new translation. And, since the people’s response to “Ecce, Agnus Dei,” namely, “Domine, non sum dignus,” occurs only in the Roman Rite without any ecumenical implications, I need not deal with that here.

To call this translation of the Ordinary of the Mass a “new” translation is clearly a misnomer. I have in my library an Advent-Christmas *Missalette* for 1969-70 that I must have picked up somewhere in my adolescent wanderings in Catholic parishes and liturgies. Dated just a few months before Palm Sunday, 1970, the day on which the Missal of Paul VI became effective in the dioceses of the United States, this *Missalette* is quite telling. The English texts of the Ordinary of Mass there are so similar to the 2006 translation that one would be hard pressed to say that the 2006 translation is even much of an update! Indeed, going from the translation used in that *Missalette* to the 2006 version would be so easy as to be barely noticeable by people in the pews. As an example, here is the Preface Dialogue and Sanctus:

The Lord be with you.
And with your spirit.
Lift up your hearts.

We have lifted them up to the Lord.
Let us give thanks to the Lord, our God.
It is right and just.
Holy, holy, holy Lord God of hosts.
Heaven and earth are filled with your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.¹⁸

The only changes here are in the response to the “*sursum corda*” where the perfect tense “have lifted” becomes now the present tense “lift,” and in the Sanctus where “is” has been added and the past tense “filled with your glory” has become the now familiar “full of your glory.”

Such ease of transition, however, will not be the case in reverse. It is no wonder then that many of my Roman Catholic colleagues have referred to this “new” translation as “retroversion.” No wonder, because, with regard to the Ordinary of the Mass that is what it is. In comparing these texts it is as though the last almost forty years of vernacular English liturgy among Roman Catholics simply did not exist, or that it was only a liturgical experiment that did not last. It is an example of what my colleague, Michael Driscoll, has called in a different context, “back to the future”;¹⁹ or, we might say, “forward into the past.”

As one who is outside of full communion with the Roman Catholic Church, it is not my intent, nor my right, to criticize that church in the least for deciding to produce and issue a new translation of the *Missale Romanum* into English at this time. Any church has the right, and even the moral obligation, to organize, translate, and celebrate the rites as it sees fit, both pastorally and theologically, without consulting anyone – if that is its choice. Everyone has known for a long time that an updated translation of the *Missale Romanum* was needed. In fact, after fourteen years of work (!) a new edition was prepared by ICEL in 1998; it was approved page by page by over three-fourths of the U. S. Catholic bishops, and all eleven English-speaking member episcopal conferences – and then rejected by Rome. *Liturgiam Authenticam* appeared only three years later.

At the same time, many Roman Catholic liturgiologists and others, some of those best trained in the liturgical disciplines, have been anything but pleased with this development. As the title of a two-part essay on the Preface Dialogue by Michael Joncas asks: “Is it Right and Just?”²⁰ John Baldovin has recently offered his critique, “Translating the Liturgy,” in the journal *America*,²¹ and my colleague Richard McBrien devoted no fewer than four of his weekly “Essays in Theology” columns to this issue in various diocesan newspapers, one of which bears the provocative title, “Lost in Translation.”²² A recent editorial in the *National Catholic Reporter* captures the overall disappointment of many:

[T]he tactics used to reverse the reforms that had resulted from the Second Vatican Council of the 1960s and more than three decades of subsequent work were secretive and engineered by people incompetent in the discipline and accountable only to a small group who had achieved power. That power was used to accomplish what they could not by persuasion or through the mainstream of liturgical scholarship... If wars ever have winners, then the winners in this one comprised a small crowd of powerful actors in the Vatican, in league with others passionately opposed to the direction that translation of documents had taken in the 35 years since Vatican II, who managed to overthrow that process and put in

place one of their own.²³

As my 1969-70 *Missalette* clearly demonstrates, what was once considered to be an interim English translation has become, with some minor adjustments, the approved translation for the next several years.

Let me move now more directly to the ecumenical question.

The Ecumenical Question

The closeness of this so-called “new” translation to what many of us grew up praying and singing in pre-1970s Protestantism – to the so-called “manner of speech of non-Catholic ecclesial communities” – is fascinating. My first venture into what I would later come to call *Liturgiewissenschaft*, or “comparative liturgiology,” came in my junior high school years out in small-town Minnesota, about eighty-five miles southwest of Lake Wobegon. There I would occasionally sit and compare the texts of my family’s 1958 Lutheran *Service Book and Hymnal* with the English translation in my Latin-English *Maryknoll Sunday Missal of the Mystical Body*, which had been given to me by a friend’s mother (who, by the way, still says “I gave that kid his first missal”).

While the translation in this *Maryknoll Missal* was not used liturgically, it was very close to what I was hearing and singing Sunday after Sunday in my own Lutheran congregation. We responded to the greeting of “the Lord be with you,” with “and with thy spirit.” The Gloria in Excelsis was a quite literal translation of the Latin Gloria. The Nicene Creed began with “I believe,” used “visible and invisible,” and even included the common phrase “Being of one substance with the Father.” Similarly, the response to “Let us give thanks unto the Lord our God,” was “It is meet and right,” with the addition of “so to do,” in order that it would correspond directly to the traditional Gregorian chant tone of the preface, to which Roman Catholics (at least their choirs) were singing “*dignum et iustum est.*” The Sanctus was “Holy, holy, holy Lord God of Sabaoth” (no “is” was thought necessary), and the Agnus Dei even translated the relative clause “*qui tollis peccata mundi*” with “that taketh away the sin of the world.” Even then, in my youthful ignorance, I was astounded by my discovery of Lutheran-Roman Catholic liturgical commonality and convergence, and by the fact that we were essentially saying the same words in our worship. Even then the “manner of speech of non-Catholic ecclesial communities” was downright “Catholic.”

We cannot overestimate the profound sense of gratitude, and the broad ecumenical-liturgical vision, engendered by the use of common and shared translations of liturgical texts from the early 1970s on, which most of us now take for granted, but something many of us actually watched and experienced as it developed before our eyes and in our ears. Not only were Roman Catholics and Protestants reading the same biblical texts Sunday after Sunday, they were now praying and singing essentially the same translations of liturgical texts. In the United States, the Roman Catholic and Lutheran bishops even produced a common *Lutheran-Roman Catholic Service of the Word* for joint liturgical celebrations.²⁴ Indeed, the Liturgical Movement and the Ecumenical Movement have been partners in the process of liturgical renewal. How tragic it is, therefore, that this new translation represents a radical departure from that now decades-old relationship.

I have yet to hear any Roman Catholic formally addressing in detail the ecumenical question

brought about by this new translation, though in his recent *America* article John Baldovin notes that for many it does constitute a “betrayal of the ecumenical consensus,” a betrayal that is insulting to “a number of Anglican and Protestant liturgical experts.”²⁵ Horace Allen, a Presbyterian ecumenist and liturgist at Boston University, for example, has said with regard to *Liturgiam Authenticam* that as a result of this document “the entire ecumenical liturgical conversation and dialogue is over – finished, dead, done.”²⁶

To the credit of Bishop Donald Trautman and the U.S. Catholic bishops’ Committee on the Liturgy, however, a valiant attempt was made until the bitter end not to change the texts I have been talking about, but to leave them alone, primarily for the pastoral reason that these texts are well known by the faithful, and there is no reason to make significant changes in the way that people pray and with texts that have become internalized.²⁷ In the end they were not successful. Cardinal Arinze, the prefect of the CDW, weighed in on this by means of a letter read immediately before the vote of the U.S. bishops, a letter which read, in part, that “it is not acceptable to maintain that people have become accustomed to a certain translation for the past thirty or forty years, and therefore that it is pastorally advisable to make no changes.”²⁸ I can only imagine the choice words that Father Aidan might have offered in response to that sort of rationale, which has vast implications for changing the formative experience of the *theologia prima* of the Catholic faithful, and makes liturgical language and response text-bound once again by forcing peoples’ noses into a book or booklet.²⁹ He once wrote that “the healthy assembly with alert ministers should not need the crutch of missalettes,”³⁰ but of course it is precisely such crutches that will now be demanded more than ever.

To my knowledge, while the internal Roman Catholic pastoral issue was raised by the bishops, the ecumenical-liturgical issue was simply not considered in any major way in this context, if at all. I wonder whether the failure to do this does not actually go against one of the principles of *Liturgiam Authenticam* itself. This states not only that “regarding the principles and norms contained in this instruction, there should be an appropriate relationship or coordination between translations used in the various rites of the Catholic church,” but that

a similar agreement is desirable also with the particular non-Catholic Eastern Churches or with the authorities of the Protestant ecclesial communities, provided that it is not a question of a liturgical text pertaining to doctrinal matters still in dispute, and provided also that . . . those consulted are truly capable of functioning as representatives of the same ecclesial communities.³¹

Horace Allen has said that “this is a not-so-subtle reference to both the Consultation on Common Texts and the English Language Liturgical Consultation. As far as I know, the Holy See is not engaged in working ecumenical relationships with other English-speaking bodies. Thus, in a not-so-gentle way, it questions our reliability.”³²

Even if that may be the case with various Protestants with regard to the Ordinary of the Mass, it is certainly not “a question of a liturgical text pertaining to doctrinal matters still in dispute,” such as the “filioque procedit” would be with the “non-Catholic East.” And so one wonders why there was not some kind of direct consultation or conversation with the “representatives” of these various communities as part of the process? Certainly we Lutherans could have found some legitimate authority figure somewhere to represent us. I suspect that Episcopalians and everyone else could have done the same. After all, both the Christian East and the Protestant West have a very long history of vernacular worship, and the Anglican tradition a centuries-old

tradition even of English liturgy. So, if we are to believe, with *Liturgiam Authenticam*, that “a similar agreement is desirable with . . . the Protestant ecclesial communities,” why was this deemed no longer desirable by those striving to produce texts in accord with *Liturgiam Authenticam*? Why was this no longer desirable for the U.S. Catholic bishops? Perhaps a tradition in which vernacular liturgy is only a few decades old could have found something helpful in continuing the consultation and conversation? After all, those of us in these other traditions have experienced changes in English texts, and in our liturgical books, several times in our histories. I think of the four plus Lutheran liturgical books I have experienced in my own short lifetime, each one of them different.

Another Roman Catholic document must also be brought into the conversation here, the 1995 encyclical letter *Ut unum sint* of Pope John Paul II.³³ In this encyclical John Paul points specifically to common prayer between Christians, saying:

It is desirable that the structure of these celebrations should take account of the different patterns of community prayer in harmony with the liturgical renewal in many churches and ecclesial communities, *with particular regard being given to the common heritage of hymns, of texts taken from lectionaries and of liturgical prayers.* (111c)

Where else but in the English-speaking world might such common prayer truly be common?

Where else but in the English-speaking world – because of the liturgical texts produced by “the liturgical renewal in many churches and ecclesial communities” – is this vision more capable of being realized? That is, at least, until now.

The ecumenical-liturgical question brought about by this translation has a special relevance to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) at this moment of history. As I am sure most of you know, the ELCA is in the process of introducing this fall a new liturgical resource entitled *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, wherein the most recent versions of the common texts are included, essentially the same texts that were in the approved but then rejected 1998 English Roman Catholic sacramentary.

Several years ago, when the ELCA published its Spanish-language liturgical resource, *El Libro de Liturgia y Cántico*, I criticized the Spanish translations of some liturgical texts – especially of the responses to be said/sung by the assembly – as being ecumenically unfortunate for essentially the same reasons I have been giving for my critique of the new *Ordo Missae* translation. I argued then that because most English-speaking liturgical churches throughout the world had tended to adopt common texts in the production of their liturgical books, Christians of differing ecclesial traditions were able to move with relative ease within each other’s liturgical celebrations. The assembly’s responses are now generally quite familiar without any need of a printed text to guide them at all. The Spanish translation in the Lutheran *Libro*, based on the English *Lutheran Book of Worship*, is different from the Spanish texts of the *Misal Romano*, and different as well from the 1981 Spanish edition of the Episcopal *Book of Common Prayer* (*El Libro de Oración Común*). All of this results in the fact that the *Misal*, the *Libro*, and the two Rites of the Episcopal *Libro de Oración Común* actually provide, for example, four distinct Spanish versions of the Preface Dialogue for use among Hispanic-Latino/a Roman Catholics, Lutherans, and Episcopalians in the United States. I concluded that “when compared with the common English liturgical texts in use in a variety of Christian traditions, this lack of a common liturgical Spanish in contemporary worship books is most unfortunate, indeed. It certainly did not *have* to be this

way.”³⁴

I would still say the same thing. But if it did not have to be that way then, it does not have to be that way now. Especially now, when many liturgical traditions are evaluating current resources and preparing new ones, ecumenical consultation and collaboration should have been at a premium. To give but two further examples: in the *Lutheran Book of Worship*, in the Confession in the Office of Compline, the phrase “by my fault, by my own fault, by my own most grievous fault” appears, much as it does now again in the English Confiteor of the Mass. But in the new *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, the three-fold “by my fault” has been omitted, with the result that it much more closely resembles the current – but shortly to become obsolete – English Confiteor in the Mass. In the Apostles’ Creed in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, the traditional Lutheran insistence against Reformed theology that “he descended into hell” was accurate for doctrinal reasons, has been changed to “he descended to the dead,” a phrase that Roman Catholics have been using officially for some time. The 2006 translation of the *Ordo Missae*, however, has restored “he descended into hell” for English-speaking Catholics. A little ecumenical conversation might have been helpful here in order to avoid this kind of situation. No, things did not *have* to be this way. But they are this way now, and because they are the question becomes: Where do we go from here in our ecumenical dialogue?

Where Do We Go From Here?

As noted before, Horace Allen’s response to *Liturgiam Authenticam* was to say that “the entire ecumenical liturgical conversation and dialogue is over – finished, dead, done,” and the now approved translation of the *Ordo Missae* will certainly be taken by many as an accurate confirmation of Allen’s assessment. While I have some sympathy with that view, I think it is too soon to make that sort of evaluation. We do not yet know when (or even if) the full English translation of the third edition of the *Missale Romanum* will be completed, approved by the bishops, amended, approved by the CDW, and then published for liturgical use. The two years often suggested as a time-table for this may be an accurate estimate, but others have said it may take from as many as five years to “not in our lifetime.” All that has been completed at present is the *Ordo Missae*, and even the several amendments made by the U. S. Catholic bishops, such as the retention of the acclamation “Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again,” not in the Latin text, are still awaiting approval or rejection.

I also think it is much too soon to make a generalization about the future of ecumenical-liturgical dialogue and conversation based on this. Although from now on we might no longer have common liturgical texts in English, we are still talking about what Gordon Lathrop would call a shared, ecumenical *ordo* of liturgy, a common pattern of worship, which, for many traditions is not necessarily bound to specific editions or books.³⁵ That has not changed, and, for that matter, we are not even talking about a new Roman Missal in this case; it is still the Missal of Pope Paul VI, which appeared in its first edition in 1969. The Latin texts of that Missal have not been changed (with the unfortunate mistake of adding “unum” to the Apostles’ Creed). Further, we are all still singing and/or praying the same basic texts that we always have, and the same basic Western eucharistic liturgy, with slightly different language (maybe just enough to trip us up in each other’s churches now). Reputable graduate programs in liturgical studies will remain ecumenical in terms of faculty and student make-up. Liturgical organizations like the North American Academy of Liturgy and the international Societas Liturgica, together with

reputable English journals in the field like *Worship* and *Studia Liturgica*, will remain ecumenical in their leadership, membership, editorial boards, and contributors. No, the loss of a common liturgical language for the Ordinary of the Mass may be an ecumenical setback and an end to some forms of convergence, but it is surely not yet the end of “ecumenical liturgical conversation and dialogue.” If anything, it may well spark the beginnings of an even increased conversation, if for no other reason than that of shared ecumenical lament (though I do not know which translation of the lament psalms would be used in this case).

At the same time, such a shift away from a common language as that represented by this new translation may well be only a reaction to some of the consequences brought about by what Paul Bradshaw has called the “homogenization of Christian Liturgy.” While acknowledging the liturgical richness that the ecumenical-liturgical movement has brought to many of our diverse traditions, Bradshaw says that, nevertheless

there have also been some less happy consequences. Enrichment has . . . brought with it some impoverishment. As we have embraced and claimed as our own practices from other churches and from earlier centuries, we have also tended to jettison a number of our former traditions. . . . By borrowing freely from a variety of quite different sources and compiling a composite liturgy therefrom, we may certainly strengthen the sense of connection that we have to other Christian traditions. . . ., but we are in real danger of losing our own roots in the process and so forgetting who we are – resulting not in anamnesis but in liturgical amnesia. . . . You can’t successfully become whatever you would like to be, or create a new *persona* merely by trying to piece together different attractive traits found in various other people.³⁶

Hence, the question of particular Roman Catholic identity seems clearly to lie behind the seemingly so ecumenically offensive statement in *Liturgia Authenticam* that “great caution is to be taken to avoid a wording or style that the Catholic faithful would confuse with the manner of speech of non-Catholic ecclesial communities or of other religions.”

Unfortunately, the ecumenical-liturgical movement, in spite of the best intentions and hard work, has not produced the sort of new ecclesial-communal *persona* that so many of us hoped it would. Although some examples to the contrary may be given, the liturgical renewal itself has not brought about full, visible Christian unity, and our churches remain as divided as ever over an increasing multitude of issues, liturgical and otherwise. The former project director of the *Lutheran Book of Worship*, Eugene Brand, hoped in the late 1970s that the next liturgical book for at least Lutherans, Roman Catholics, and Episcopalians would be a common book; this now sounds like science fiction rather than an accurate prediction of the future. And even with common texts and a commonly accepted liturgical theology, a renewed liturgy has not been able to bring about unity within denominations themselves. For example, not only is the ELCA introducing *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* this fall, the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod is introducing its new *Lutheran Service Book* at the same time. What is more, the self-defined reforming movement both within and outside the ELCA called “Word Alone” is in the process of producing or adopting its own liturgical resource entitled *Reclaim*. At present a short 2006 version of it is being advertised as

a theologically sound alternative to the ELCA’s *Renewing Worship/Evangelical Lutheran Worship* hymnal. It is an ideal supplement to the *Lutheran Book of Worship*. The final *Reclaim*

hymnal resource will be a complete, self-standing hymnal for individual and congregational use.³⁷

When Lutherans in the United States are further away than ever, it seems, from Henry Melchior Muhlenberg's dream of "one Lutheran church, one book," why would we be concerned ecumenically about something so minimal in comparison as a new English translation of the Ordinary of the Mass for Roman Catholics?

Furthermore, Christian unity, of course, has never demanded strict liturgical uniformity for Roman Catholics, for Protestants, or for Eastern Orthodox. As the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches' 1982 Lima Statement, *Baptism, Eucharist, Ministry*, said: "a certain liturgical diversity compatible with our common Eucharistic faith is recognized as a healthy and enriching fact. The affirmation of a common Eucharistic faith does not imply uniformity in either liturgy or practice."³⁸ In light of this, and certainly within evangelical liturgical freedom, Protestants might well ask themselves if there are not some elements in this "new" Roman Catholic translation that are worthy of their wider consideration. Is it time, for example, to reconsider the use of the biblical expression "and with your spirit" as the centuries' old English response to "the Lord be with you"? Is it time to think again about whether or not "of one being with the Father" best translates *consubstantialialem est* and *homoousios*? As long as no one ever forces me to say "is" in the Sanctus (except in Spanish), is it time also for me to embrace the lost but now found phrases of the Gloria in excelsis? Indeed, if, for example, the ELCA is going to continue producing liturgical resources on line to accompany *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, it would certainly be ecumenically appropriate, even laudable, that musical settings of *this* translation of the Gloria might also be made available, and that composers not be limited textually to only one translation. It would have been nice – and even expected in what we thought was an ecumenical age – that we could have looked at these issues together.

Nevertheless, while Roman Catholics may be textually bound to this new translation, Protestants will not be. As such we are free to make use of it or not as we see fit. In fact, a diversity of available English liturgical texts is not inimical to Protestantism at all as, for example, any Episcopalian who uses both Rites I and II from the same 1979 *Book of Common Prayer*, or any Church of England communicant with the 1662 *Book of Common Prayer* and the 2000 *Common Worship* in the same pew, certainly knows. If some might want to ascribe a certain Latin liturgical fundamentalist attitude to both the framers of *Liturgiam Authenticam* and to the 2006 translation of the *Ordo Missae*, others must be careful about becoming 1970s type textual liturgical fundamentalists, or in claiming that the liturgical-ecumenical convergence of the last forty years is the be-all and end-all of modern liturgical development.

With regard to this, Bradshaw has argued that "convergence should not be allowed to become a straightjacket within which liturgical richness is confined," and further, that

above all, we need to learn the lessons of history. No age has managed to produce a definitive form of Christian worship that has lasted. The fourth-century liturgical consensus was no more successful at that than its varied predecessors. Yet change has more often led to a narrowing rather than a broadening of the parameters of acceptable liturgy and loosened rather than strengthened the ties to its roots.³⁹

Conclusion

With *Liturgiam Authenticam* and the 2006 approved new translation of the *Ordo Missae* we have entered a new phase of liturgical history. I do not agree that with these developments “the entire ecumenical liturgical conversation and dialogue is over – finished, dead, done.” I do think, however, that its survival is not automatically assured any longer without serious attention and sustained reflection and conversation by those of us who remain committed to the liturgical implications of the pursuit of full, visible Christian unity. We cannot allow the ecumenical liturgical conversation to become only a conversation among diverse Protestant traditions alone. How tragic it would be if, when the history of Christian liturgy in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century is written, that this period of time would be described in an extended footnote as one during which an ecumenical liturgical experiment was tried but was found lacking, and did not last even fifty years. I hope we can commit ourselves to making sure in our prayer and in our scholarship that this does not happen.

ENDNOTES

Another version of this essay has appeared in *Studia Liturgica* 37 (2007) 55-72.

1. Maxwell Johnson, “Liturgy and Ecumenism: Gifts, Challenges, and Hopes for a Renewed Vision,” *Worship* 80 (2006) 2-29.
2. United States Catholic Bishops Documentation, *Ordo Missae, the Order of Mass* (Washington: International Commission on English in the Liturgy, 2006).
3. For the text of *Liturgiam Authenticam* see Peter Jeffery, *Translating Tradition: A Chant Historian Reads Liturgiam Authenticam* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press/Pueblo, 2005), 123-65.
4. See *ibid.*, ¶¶ 19-33, pp. 128-33.
5. See *The Order of Mass in Eight Languages* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1992).
6. On this see Jan Michael Joncas, “Is it Right and Just? Further Thoughts on Liturgical Translation,” part 1, *We Believe! Newsletter* (May, 2004), 2-3, 5; part 2, *We Believe! Newsletter* (August, 2004), 2-3, at <http://webelieve.cc/>.
7. See *The Order of Mass in Eight Languages*.
8. Jeffery, *Translating Tradition*, 18-19, with the references omitted.
9. *Ibid.*, 21-22; references omitted.
10. *Ordo Missae*, note 38, p. 67.
11. See, e.g., the *Saint Andrew Daily Missal* (Bruges: Biblica, 1962) 804-5.
12. See Jeffery, *Translating Tradition*, 22.

13. L. C. Mohlberg, ed., *Liber sacramentorum romanae aeclesiae ordinis anni circuli (Cod. Vat. Reg. Lat. 316/Paris Bibl. Nat. 7193, 41/56): Sacramentarium Gelasianum* (Rome: Herder, 1960) 49.
14. See F. E. Brightman, *Liturgies Eastern and Western, 1, Eastern Liturgies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1899; repr. 1965) 385.
15. See Conferencia episcopal mexicana, *Misal Romano*, 11th ed. (Mexico City: Buena Prensa, 2001) 295.
16. Brightman, *Liturgies Eastern and Western*, 385.
17. See Conferencia episcopal española, *Missale Hispano-Mozarabicum* (Toledo: Conferencia episcopal española, 1991) 1:72.
18. *Celebrating the Eucharist: Our Parish Prays and Sings Sunday Weekday Mass Guide, Advent-Christmas Season, 1969-70* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1969) 42-44.
19. Michael Driscoll, "Liturgy and Devotions: Back to the Future?" in *The Renewal That Awaits Us*, ed. Eleanor Bernstein and Martin Connell (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1997) 68-90.
20. See above, note 6.
21. John Baldwin, "Translating the Liturgy: The Controversy over the Order of Mass," *America* (September 25, 2006) 27
22. These are available at <http://129.74.54.81/rm/>. The essays in question run from July 10 -31, 2006.
23. "Jarring History of the Liturgy Wars," editorial, *National Catholic Reporter*, NCRonline.org, June 30, 2006.
24. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1986.
25. Baldwin, "Translating the Liturgy," 27.
26. Horace T. Allen, Jr., "Ecumenist Calls Rome's Translation Norms Unrealistic, Authoritarian," *National Catholic Reporter*, June 29, 2001.
27. See *Ordo Missae*, note 3, p. 2.
28. The text of this letter appears at <http://www.adoremus.org/0606Arinze.html>.
29. See Aidan Kavanagh, *On Liturgical Theology* (New York: Pueblo, 1984) 105-6.
30. Aidan Kavanagh, *Elements of Rite: A Handbook of Liturgical Style* (New York: Pueblo, 1982),25.

31. *Liturgiam Authenticam*, ¶ 91, in Jeffery, *Translating Tradition*, 149.
32. See note 26.
33. *Origins* 25, 4 (June 8, 1995) 49-72.
34. Maxwell Johnson, "The 1998 *Libro de liturgia y cántico* of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America: A Brief Evaluation of its *Sección de Liturgia*," *Worship* 73 (1999) 331-48.
35. See Gordon Lathrop, *Holy Things: A Liturgical Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993).
36. Paul Bradshaw, "The Homogenization of Christian Liturgy – Ancient and Modern: Presidential Address," *Studia Liturgica* 26 (1996) 13.
37. <http://www.reclaimlutheranworship.org/introductory.php>.
38. World Council of Churches, *Baptism, Eucharist, Ministry*, Faith and Order Paper 111 (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1982), Eucharist III: 28.
39. "The Homogenization of Christian Liturgy," 15.

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