

- Liturgical Consummation of Philosophy*, Chapter five.
- 30 See John Bossy, *Christianity in the West 1400–1700*, 140–52 and *passim*.
- 31 Mauss, *The Gift*.
- 32 James Harrington, *The Commonwealth of Oceania and A System of Politics* ed. J.G.A. Pocock (C.U.P., Cambridge, 1992), Chapter IV, aphorism 2, 273.
- 33 See Bataille, *Theory of Religion*.
- 34 See Jacques Derrida 'Donner la Mort' in Rabate and Wetzell eds. *l'Ethique du Don*. (Métaillé Transition, Paris, 1992); M. Blanchot, *The Space of Literature* trans. Anne Smock, (Nebraska U.P., Lincoln, 1982), 95; E. Levinas, 'Time and the Other' in S. Hand, ed. *The Levinas Reader* (Blackwell, Oxford, 1978) 279–311.
- 35 See Pickstock, *The Sacred Polis: On the Liturgical Consummation of Philosophy*, Chapter III.
- 36 See Henri de Lubac, *Corpus Mysticism* (Aubier, Paris, 1948) and Pickstock *The Sacred Polis: On the Liturgical Consummation of Philosophy*, chapter six.
- 37 On 'double excess' see John Milbank, 'On Complex Space', Chapter 12 of *The Word Made Strange*, (Blackwell, Oxford, forthcoming November, 1996).

What kind of Missal are we Getting?

Bruce Harbert

The Sunday before Advent has long been known among Anglicans as 'Stir-up Sunday', the day for stirring mincemeat, cakes and puddings in preparation for Christmas. Its title is drawn from the opening words of its Collect in the Book of Common Prayer (BCP), *Stir up, we beseech thee, O Lord, the wills of thy faithful people*, translated by Cranmer from a Latin collect beginning *Excita*, 'stir up', which has been part of the Roman liturgy since the sixth century.

The Catholic liturgy, too, has kept this ancient text for the week before Advent, but the version in the current Missal from the International Committee on English in the Liturgy (ICEL) is much duller: *Lord, increase our eagerness to do your will*. It is good news that this is to be replaced with a version that, like Cranmer, recalls the peremptory crispness of the original: *Stir up the hearts of your faithful people, Lord God* It is unlike Cranmer and the Latin, however, in

that the words 'Stir up' do not stand alone, and so they are less arresting, less memorable.

This new version is part of the revision of the Missal undertaken by ICEL, whose fruits are now being submitted to Bishops' Conferences for approval. The bishops of England and Wales have voted to accept most of the prayers submitted, including those for the Masses of weeks in Ordinary Time. In so doing, they parted company with their brother bishops in the USA, who have raised objections to a number of texts.

ICEL has become something of a tyranny, which individual bishops' conferences are in effect powerless to resist. The wish of Pope Paul VI that there should be a single English version of the liturgy for the whole world makes it impossible to take account of local conditions and traditions: ICEL is assuming the mantle of an English-speaking Congregation of Rites, and preventing the process of inculturation which should be an important part of liturgical renewal. In particular, since ICEL will not allow its material to be mixed with texts from any other source, we cannot make full use of the work done in other Christian groups with long experience of vernacular worship, such as the Church of England.

A Bishop is the principal liturgist of his diocese. His rôle in the promulgation of liturgical texts is different from his rôle as a censor of books: here it is not merely a matter of guarding against doctrinal or moral error, but of ensuring that the Church's tradition is handed on through her liturgy in texts of high quality. In reaching their judgements in this area, bishops are able to draw on a considerable body of scholarship.

The Collects for Ordinary Time are among the most ancient prayers in the Roman Rite. The great liturgist Edmund Bishop, in a famous essay on *The Genius of the Roman Rite* drew attention to their precision, soberness and sense, and to the difficulty of translating them.

Cranmer used many of them in the Book of Common Prayer. He did not reproduce their conciseness, often using two words where the Latin had one (e.g. 'increase and multiply' for *multiplica*), and he sometimes retouched them to accord with his theological views, but he often adopted their sentence-patterns, as we have seen in the case of 'Stir up', and produced some memorable prayers. These collects are an element in Western tradition common to Anglicans and Catholics. The compilers of the 1980 Anglican Alternative Service Book (ASB) retained several of them, unobtrusively modernising Cranmer's language rather than attempting a completely new translation.

Catholics in England and Wales have already had three official versions of these collects: the first ICEL Missal of 1973 (ICEL 1), the Missal produced by the National Liturgical Commission in the early 1970s (NLC), and that in *The Divine Office* (DO) published by Collins. The five versions already in use offer a standard of comparison for the sixth, as well as raising the question whether it was really necessary.

The Stir-up collect continues, in the ASB modernisation of Cranmer: *that richly bearing the fruit of good works, they may by you be richly rewarded*. The echo *richly . . . richly*, which draws attention to a balance between the two phrases, and consequently to a balance between our deeds and God's response, follows the sentence-pattern of the original and makes the prayer shapely, satisfying to the mind, and memorable. The new ICEL 2 version is formless in comparison: *that they may cooperate more readily in the work of grace / and obtain in ever greater measure / the saving power of your goodness*. It suffers from an excess of unstressed syllables and a lack of clear rhythm, and in this is typical of ICEL's rendering of the Roman Collects.

Anybody who imagines that rhetorical devices such as Cranmer learnt from his Latin originals are alien to our modern culture need look no further for refutation than to the alternative collects that ICEL provides alongside its translations, which are full of parallelism and balance, for example: *O God, whose image we bear / and whose name we carry, / yours is the world and all it contains*. (Week 29). Why does ICEL make its translations so unmemorable? Does it want us to forget the prayers of the Roman rite and adopt its own alternatives instead?

ICEL 2's Stir-up collect is also colourless in its lack of imagery: the idea of 'fruit', so rich in scriptural resonances, has been removed. A picture and a rhythm that have been part of our tradition for 1400 years have vanished: might we not do better to adopt the modern Anglican version?

Although Cranmer chose a more verbose style than his Roman originals, he followed them in their restrained sobriety. ICEL seems to find this too cool, and has a tendency to raise the emotional temperature of the collects. We have already seen 'hearts' replace 'wills' in the Stir-up collect. Similarly, in Week 4 a prayer that we may worship God 'with our whole mind' changes this phrase to *with undivided hearts*. In Week 21, where the Latin means literally 'O God, you cause the minds of the faithful to be of one will', ICEL 2 has *O God, you inspire the hearts of the faithful with a single longing*. The other Catholic versions make similar changes: *make us one in mind and heart* (ICEL 1), *by your grace we are made one in mind and heart* (DO), *O God, you unite the hearts of all your faithful* (NLC). This is

what I call the 'cuddle-factor'—a tendency in modern Catholicism to exalt the heart at the expense of the head. ASB is much more stern: *Almighty God, / who alone can bring order / to the unruly wills and passions of sinful men.*

Similarly, ICEL 2 is unimpressed in Week 17 by the prayer that God will multiply his mercy upon us (*multiplica super nos misericordiam tuam*), despite Shakespeare's image of mercy which 'droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven', and prefers *enfold us in your gracious care and mercy*, while DO has *support us always with your love*: for ICEL 2 mercy is around us, for DO below us.

One of the motives for revising the ICEL Missal was to purge its texts of a propensity towards Pelagianism, that is, laying more emphasis on what we do than on what God does in the work of our salvation. We glimpse this tendency in ICEL 1's Eucharistic Prayer I: *you know how firmly we believe in you*. It has not been entirely eliminated by ICEL 2. For instance, we are asked to pray *grant that we may serve you with undivided hearts / and so experience the power of your mercy* (Week 24) and *give us the grace to keep these commandments / and so inherit eternal life* (Week 25) which, unlike the Latin originals, give the impression with *and so* that God's response to our efforts is automatic. Similarly, *that we may strive for the things you have promised / and come to share the treasures of heaven* (Week 26) allows less space for divine initiative than the passive in BCP's corresponding prayer *that we . . . may . . . be made partakers of thy heavenly treasure*, as does *that we may one day gain the inheritance you have promised* (Week 19) in comparison with ASB's *that all mankind may be brought / to the glorious liberty of the sons of God*.

A more striking example of Pelagianisation is found in Week 11 with *without you we are weak and certain to fall* where BCP has *through the weakness of our mortal nature we can do no good thing without thee*. A casual reader might suspect that BCP is influenced by Lutheranism, with its emphasis on the total corruption of human nature as a result of the Fall, but the fact is that BCP is closer to the Latin, which is more 'Lutheran' than ICEL 2: *sine te nihil potest mortalis infirmitas*. This illustrates a general tendency on the part of ICEL to show a more extreme Western Catholic theological bias than the Latin liturgy: ICEL is more Roman than Rome.

This is especially clear in the Collect for Week 6 (not translated in BCP or ASB), which begins *Deus, qui te in rectis et sinceris manere pectoribus asseris*. NLC accurately, and not inelegantly, rendered this *Lord, you promise to make your home in upright and sincere hearts*

(granted an understandable substitution of 'hearts' for 'breasts'). ICEL 2's *O God, / you promise to remain with those / whose hearts are faithful and just* replaces 'in' by 'with', and thus erases the whole notion of God dwelling within the human heart by grace. This concept, dear to the Eastern Fathers, only entered Western theology late and under their influence. It is therefore particularly precious in the Roman Rite, and harmonious with the attempt of the new Catechism to reintegrate Eastern and Western approaches to Christian life. It should not be lost.

As Edmund Bishop realised, collects in the Roman tradition will always present a difficult challenge to the translator. Cranmer has shown that they can be adapted to English style without destruction of their basic temper. ICEL shows itself less respectful of them than Cranmer. There is cause for regret that, in England and Wales, Catholics have shown themselves less faithful custodians of the traditions of the Roman Rite than Anglicans.

Translation has come into the news in recent years with the publication of the English Catechism. Discussion has focussed on gender-related issues, while other matters, no less complex or important, have been widely ignored. This article has sketched a few of them in a liturgical context. The collects for Ordinary Time, if finally approved by all the Bishops' Conferences that subscribe to ICEL, will be much used: we shall grow familiar with them, much more familiar than we shall ever be with the Catechism. They should become part of the staple diet of our devotional and liturgical life, as they have been for generations of Anglicans. This will only be so if they are of the highest quality. It is good news, then, that bishops have begun to ask whether these venerable texts have yet received the careful attention they deserve.

The English Catechism was long delayed by difficulties over translation. The same may well happen to the Missal if, as seems likely, the American bishops demand better scholarship and more careful translation from ICEL. Once approved by Bishops' Conferences, ICEL texts will have to be submitted to Rome, where perceptions have been sharpened and suspicions aroused by slovenly work on the Catechism: the authorities there are less likely now to approve texts without careful scrutiny, and this could lead to further delay. All in all, it is doubtful whether we shall see a new ICEL Missal before the end of the century. In England and Wales, the intervening time could be well spent using native expertise to create, independently of ICEL, a worthy vernacular liturgy, adequate to local needs, traditions, challenges and opportunities.