

Very Members Incorporate: Reflections on the Sacral Language of *Divine Worship*

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Among the first fruits of the liturgical provision according to the Apostolic Constitution *Anglicanorum Coetibus*, the recently promulgated Missal for Ordinariate usage, under the title *Divine Worship*, represents a momentous development in the history of Catholic worship: for the first time, the Catholic Church has officially recognized, blessed, approved, and made her own in a sustained and permanent fashion a collection of liturgical texts that found voice and developed outside the bounds of her visible communion.¹ *Divine Worship: The Missal* is noteworthy for many reasons, not least of which is its consistent use of a traditional idiom of liturgical English derived from the classic Books of Common Prayer. The Vatican commission *Anglicanae Traditiones* (advisory to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments) had the task of assessing the wide variety of “liturgical books proper to the Anglican tradition” in order to discern, winnow, and harmonize a unified body of liturgical “patrimony” amenable to Catholic worship and duly conformed to Catholic doctrinal and sacramental norms, including the careful evaluation of linguistic register.² That the Holy See has definitively identified

1 The liturgical text approved for the Pastoral Provision parishes in the United States, *The Book of Divine Worship* (Mt. Pocono, PA: Newman House Press, 2003) merits mention as an important precedent and prefiguration, albeit one limited in scope and somewhat tentative in context, certainly in comparison with *Divine Worship*.

2 See Steven J. Lopes, “A Missal for the Ordinariates: The Work of the *Anglicanae Traditiones* Interdicasterial Commission” in this issue of *Antiphon* and his “The Liturgy of the Ordinariates for Former Anglicans,” in *Origins: CNS Documentary Service* 42 (2013) 579–583 (originally deliv-

texts in traditional rather than contemporary English for such liturgical repatriation, in order to authenticate for the Ordinariates a “precious gift nourishing the faith” and “a treasure to be shared,”³ deserves some comment and explanation. To some, it may seem intriguing or perplexing that the Catholic Church in the twenty-first century has been moved to reclaim a liturgical corpus and an idiom of prayer stemming from the Reformation, expressed in a hieratic dialect forged in the sixteenth century, and shaped over nearly five-hundred years of continuous, if checkered, public worship.

Hence, in these pages, I mean to explore the distinctive sacral language of *Divine Worship* as exemplified in the newly approved *Missal* (2015) and in *Occasional Services* (2014) with its rites for Baptism, Confirmation, Matrimony, and funerals. This language, though unabashedly old-fashioned and sometimes slightly archaic without being obsolete, has proven itself over the centuries remarkably conducive to the active participation of the faithful and remains in its own way richly intelligible, even as it now finds a new place “meet and right” in union with the Catholic Church to serve the Ordinariates’ “bounden duty” and mission. Accordingly, I would like also to discuss the function of liturgical language itself, in the ecclesial context of Catholic communion, and to consider both the promise and some of the perils of this special liturgical dialect, particularly as the Ordinariate faithful think about the pastoral stewardship of worshipping the Lord “in the beauty of holiness” by way of the traditional, hieratic vernacular best called “Prayer Book English.” Thus I invite reflection on an idiom of worship that is familiar, formative, and beloved to many in the Ordinariates (but not everyone), and a style of liturgical prayer with roots deep in the English tradition, now renewed by authority of the Holy See, and yet awaiting the prospect of evangelizing new generations of Catholic faithful.

ered as an address at the symposium on the Mission of the Ordinariates at St. Mary’s Seminary in Houston, Texas, 2 February 2013).

3 Quotations from Pope Benedict XVI, Apostolic Constitution Providing for Personal Ordinariates for Anglicans Entering into Full Communion with the Catholic Church *Anglicanorum Coetibus* (4 November 2009) Art. III.

I THE ECCLESIAL CONTEXT

In *Tract 90*, John Henry Newman wrote, “our Prayer Book is acknowledged on all hands to be of Catholic origin.”⁴ Thus Newman, a few years before his conversion, staked the claims of the Oxford Movement on the Catholic sources and the enduring Catholic character of the *Book of Common Prayer*, and he did so notwithstanding its excisions and occasional ambiguities and despite certain problematic formulations in the Thirty-Nine Articles, whose doctrinal difficulties famously would help deliver him into the communion of the Catholic Church. In suggesting that the English Prayer Book had the potential to serve as a vehicle for “Catholic” worship, Newman anticipated, at least implicitly, a possibility that would not come to fruition until the next century with the Second Vatican Council and its Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, namely, that worship in the Roman Rite could find voice in a noble vernacular idiom. He foreshadowed, as well, in his witness of continuity between his Anglican formation and its Catholic fulfillment, the promise confirmed in *Anglicanorum Coetibus* that the Anglican tradition has managed to retain and convey “elements of sanctification and truth,” as “forces impelling towards Catholic unity” and “as gifts properly belonging to the Church of Christ.”⁵ For Newman, this witness was forged, at least in part, by his abiding “affection and reverence” for the very words and rhythms of the Prayer Book, as much as his regard for its doctrinal content.⁶ This attachment was something he shared with many other converts, including G. K. Chesterton who, well after he entered the Church, praised the Catholic resonance and special linguistic vigor of the Prayer Book in “the music and magic of the great sixteenth-century style,” shaped by the “speech of men still by instinct and habit of mind Catholic... It is the one positive possession and attraction; the

4 John Henry Newman, *Tract 90*, in *The Via Media of the Anglican Church Illustrated in Lectures, Letters, and Tracts Written between 1830 and 1841*, vol. 2 (London: Longmans, 1914) 271.

5 *Anglicanorum Coetibus*, Introduction, para. 4, quoting Second Vatican Council, Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium* (21 November 1964) 8.

6 See Newman’s sermon, “The Liturgy Public: Its Three Peculiar Uses” (7 February 1830), in *Sermons on the Liturgy and Sacraments and on Christ the Mediator* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991) 73–74.

one magnet and talisman for people even outside the Anglican Church.⁷⁷ For Newman and Chesterton, as for many others who have followed in their steps, the standard for assessing the Prayer Book's language and content is the measure of Catholic tradition and truth as supervised in every age by the authority of the magisterial *Ecclesia docens*. What they could not have imagined, from the vantage point of their own conversions, is the advent of a remarkable ecclesial context in which their voices and those of many others have formed a chorus for the pastoral ears of *Ecclesia audiens* and come together with a set of liturgical developments and convergences in the Roman Rite itself to make possible the formal validation of their experience and its extension as part of the Church's evangelizing mission.

Some of the best resources and most cogent arguments, I have discovered, for understanding the rationale, both theological and sociolinguistic, for a sacral or hieratic liturgical vernacular in English come not from Anglican apologists for the old Prayer Book, nor even from the testimony of converts, but from various discussions of *Liturgiam Authenticam* (2001), the Fifth Instruction for the Right Implementation of *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, together with the resultant 2010 revised English translation of the *Roman Missal* in its Third Typical Edition. *Liturgiam Authenticam* calls for the "development, in each vernacular, of a sacred style that will come to be recognized as proper to liturgical language (*sermo proprie liturgicus*)."⁷⁸ The Instruction thereby signals a shift away from a principle of liturgical translation based on "dynamic equivalence," aimed at elusive goals of contemporary "relevance" and "accessibility," toward one based more on "formal equivalence," directed at accuracy, fidelity to the original Latin texts, and measured emulation of their stylistic features within the capacity of each vernacular language.⁹ Citing the example of the Eastern Catholic Rites and their venerable tradition of worship according to highly stylized, somewhat archaic forms of the liturgical vernacular, *Liturgiam Authenticam*

7 G. K. Chesterton, "My Six Conversions: IV. The Prayer-Book Problem," *The Well and the Shallows* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1935) 46–47, 50.

8 Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, Fifth Instruction for the Right Implementation of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Liturgiam Authenticam* (28 March 2001) 27.

9 Ibid.; cf. 20, 23, 47, 49, 57, 59.

thus recommends a comparable, albeit authentic, “inculturation” of the Latin Rite whereby the distinctive vocabulary, syntax, and grammar proper to divine worship and characteristic of the Latin tradition might be captured with dignity and stability and mediated through the historical resources and native genius of diverse peoples and tongues, all “to prepare for a new era of liturgical renewal.”¹⁰

As Msgr. Andrew Burnham has pointed out, in the Anglophone context, the norms of *Liturgiam Authenticam* had the effect of complicating the ecumenical sharing of common texts reflective of modern Anglican liturgical revision in contemporary English.¹¹ At the same time, however, these norms auspiciously prepared the ground for another kind of ecumenical convergence, one that has now borne fruit through *Anglicanorum Coetibus*: in the sacred language of the traditional Books of Common Prayer, we find a ready-made, time-tested, carefully honed dialect of worship that, *mutatis mutandis*, with only a few adjustments, admirably answers to the promise of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* and the requirements of *Liturgiam Authenticam*. Though *Liturgiam Authenticam* and *Anglicanorum Coetibus* are circumstantially quite distinct, and while the new English translation of the *Roman Missal* and the texts of *Divine Worship* are rather different in style and some content, all of these works of the Church represent a striking, perhaps providential, convergence of concerns with shared roots in Vatican II, its Decree on Ecumenism, and its Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy. It may be tempting to set the linguistic register of *Divine Worship* and the new *Roman Missal* in contrast, but both are complementary fruits of the same tree with a similar capacity for feeding the faithful in our own age.

To specify this ecclesial context a bit more, I would suggest that this alignment of influences could be understood in relation to a “hermeneutic of renewal in continuity” (a phrase which is not just the slogan of a single pontificate but a key to the Church’s own self-understanding through the ages, with an emphasis upon “renewal” as much as “continuity”).¹² And I would

10 Ibid., 7; cf. 4, 5, 32, 47.

11 See Andrew Burnham, *Heaven and Earth in Little Space: The Re-enchantment of Liturgy* (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2010) 37–39.

12 Benedict XVI, *Christmas Address to the Members of the Roman Curia* (22 December 2005): “...there is the ‘hermeneutic of reform,’ of

suggest too that the liturgical results of this convergence are best grasped with reference to principles of “organic development” that have shaped the evolution and growth of Catholic liturgy over the centuries, often by fits-and-starts and sometimes with notable “course-corrections” steered by the authority of the Apostolic See, yet keeping by-and-large to the path of the Church’s pilgrimage through history.¹³

But to some, no doubt, this application of standards of continuity and organic development to a liturgical tradition that began in manifest rupture from Catholic truth (in politically motivated schism, issuing in heresy) may seem problematic. Yet the pastoral generosity of Pope Benedict’s Apostolic Constitution is premised on the studied acknowledgement that, despite the historical reality of rupture, the Anglican liturgical tradition managed to preserve and then subsequently revive and develop much that is indisputably Catholic in expression and content, affording a stream, so to speak, of residual and prevenient grace nourishing aspirations to restored ecclesial unity, at least for those properly disposed to drink of the waters.¹⁴ To shift the metaphor a bit, through *Anglicanorum Coetibus* the pastoral solicitude of the

renewal in the continuity of the one subject-Church which the Lord has given to us. She is a subject which increases in time and develops, yet always remaining the same, the one subject of the journeying People of God.”

13 For a sound characterization of the meaning of “organic development,” see Alcuin Reid, *The Organic Development of the Liturgy* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005) 308: “Organic development holds openness to growth (prompted by pastoral needs) and continuity with Tradition in due proportion. It listens to scholarly desiderata and considers anew the values of practices lost in the passage of time, drawing upon them to improve liturgical Tradition gradually, only if and when this is truly necessary. Ecclesiastical authority supervises this growth, at times making prudential judgments about what is appropriate in the light of the needs of different ages, but always taking care that liturgical Tradition is never impoverished and that what is handed on is truly that precious heritage received from our fathers, perhaps judiciously pruned and carefully augmented (but not wholly reconstructed), according to the circumstances of the Church in each age, ensuring continuity of belief and practice.”

14 See *Anglicanorum Coetibus*, Introduction, para. 1. See also Michael Rear, “This Offer Was 400 Years in the Making,” in *The Catholic Herald* (6 November 2009).

Church has performed something of the Father's role as "vine-dresser" (Jn 15:1), tending the vineyard of Christ to assure continued and wider fruitfulness, and, in the particular case of reclaiming Anglican liturgical patrimony, to graft selected growths, proven scions of Anglican provenance, back on the durable root-stalk of the Roman Rite.

Before turning to the particular claims and properties of Prayer Book English in the Ordinariate Missal, I think this ecclesial context is an important point of departure, especially as full communion in the Catholic Church, while allowing diversity of expression in the unity of the faith, entails full integration with the magisterial authority governing Catholic worship. This context is also important lest we think of *Divine Worship* only as the permissive indulgence of praying in a comfortable Anglican accent. While *Divine Worship* may be a pastoral *accommodation* of a certain, proven style of worship and though it may be a special kind of ecumenical *inculturation*,¹⁵ it is also a more challenging *incorporation* of select Anglican patrimony into the saving, sanctifying work of the Roman Rite itself.

II THE FUNCTION OF LITURGICAL LANGUAGE AND THE PROBLEM OF PERSONAL TASTE

But quite aside from the context of ecclesial sanction and the attendant evangelizing responsibility, it may also be important to recognize that not everyone will immediately like or appreciate the language of *Divine Worship*, and some (including members of the Ordinariates coming from different liturgical backgrounds and accustomed to more contemporary language) may at first feel uneasy with the Ordinariate Missal's consistent, uncompromising preference for a style of traditional, liturgical English derived from the classic Prayer Books. Some might question the pastoral effectiveness of such a hieratic liturgical dialect in the twenty-first century, and certain skeptics might dismiss *Divine Worship* as a "Tudorbethan fantasy," "an exercise in mock-Tudor nostalgia," or "a Cranmerian pastiche with limited appeal." Even though it is anticipated that *Divine Worship* will be welcomed by

15 On *Divine Worship* as an example of legitimate liturgical "inculturation," see Hans-Jürgen Feulner, "'Anglican Use of the Roman Rite'? The Unity of the Liturgy in the Diversity of Its Rites and Forms," in *Antiphon* 17 (2013) 31–72, esp. 49–52.

the faithful of the Ordinariates, a measure of criticism is to be expected and is in fact quite understandable. But I would suggest that such misgivings can be an occasion to rediscover and rethink the evangelizing potential of Catholic worship in a sacral idiom that is distinct from, yet complementary with, that of the new English translation of the *Roman Missal*.

There is no accounting for taste, as they say, but it is a reality of the last fifty years of experimentation with vernacular liturgical language that viewpoints are many and fractured, in both Catholic and Anglican quarters. As Msgr. Kevin Irwin once quipped, in discussing styles of liturgical translations, “when two or three are gathered together, there’s sure to be at least four or five opinions.”¹⁶ David Crystal, the accomplished and prolific English linguist, who has written widely on vernacular liturgical dialects, observes, however, that personal predilections about language are “relatively useless,” apart from an informed analysis and understanding of what liturgical language *is* and what liturgical language *does* in the context of public worship viewed from both diachronic and synchronic perspectives.¹⁷ Liturgy, of its very nature, as the public worship of God and the recollected enactment of divine mysteries, requires a language set apart from everyday communication, description, and commerce. Historically liturgical language, even when it aims at intelligibility and engaged participation in the vernacular, is inevitably, to one degree or another, a specialized idiom (a *Sondersprache*), a register of language purposefully situated and one that takes its place as an integral component in the overall *Gestalt* of enacted praise, thanks-

16 Kevin W. Irwin, “Liturgy as Mediated Immediacy: Sacramentality and Enacted Words” (for the USCCB series *The Intellectual Tasks of the New Evangelization*): <http://usccb.org/about/doctrine/intellectual-tasks/upload/intellectual-tasks-of-the-new-evangelization-irwin.pdf>.

17 David Crystal, “A Liturgical Language in a Sociolinguistic Perspective,” in *Language and the Worship of the Church*, ed. R. C. D. Jasper (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1990) 120–146, esp. 144–146. See also Crystal, “Language and Religion,” in *Twentieth-Century Catholicism*, ed. Lancelot C. Sheppard (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1966) 11–28; “Linguistics and Liturgy,” in *The Church Quarterly* 2 (1969) 23–30; and “A Liturgical Language in a Linguistic Perspective,” in *New Blackfriars* 46 (1964) 148–156; together with chapter 11, “Language and the Liturgy: The Principles of a Liturgical Language,” in *Linguistics, Language, and Religion* (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1965) 149–156.

giving, penitence, supplication, and sacramental participation.¹⁸ Liturgical language in the Catholic tradition is the verbal cognate of the stylized gestures, ritual actions, vestments, candlesticks, and architectural ordering of the sanctuary, themselves hearkening back to the historical character of ancient cultural forms and all of which work together with the dialect of proclaimed prayer to take the worshipping congregation out of the profane world into a sacred precinct for a dedicated and communal encounter with God. Accordingly, notes Crystal, liturgical language fulfills its proper function when it achieves qualities of dignity, stability, and memorability, and it typically, historically, has served these ends through the select retention of “archaisms, specialized vocabulary, and formulaic diction,” all to help transcend the inevitable flux and contingency of linguistic change and to shape an enduring idiom of public prayer.¹⁹

Even yet, the descriptive account of what liturgical language is and the functional analysis of what it does must find their motive and normative character in a properly theological rationale. Supremely in the Holy Eucharist and more broadly throughout all liturgical rites, it is the purpose of the language of Christian worship to help effect, to incarnate, indeed to inculturate diversely the one, originary and summative *anamnesis* (or actualizing remembrance) of the Paschal Mystery of Christ’s passion, death, resurrection, as-

18 Crystal’s functionalist analysis of liturgical language independently complements and corroborates Christine Mohrmann’s important historical investigation of the stylized character of early liturgical Latin: as she argues, from the earliest experience of vernacular worship in the Roman world, the idiom of Christian liturgical prayer was distinct from the everyday language of commerce (*sermo utilis*), from the language of literary sophistication (*sermo urbanus*), and from the language of the illiterate (*sermo vulgaris*) to constitute instead the very kind of *Sondersprache* outlined in *Liturgiam Authenticam* as *sermo proprie liturgicus*. See Mohrmann, *Liturgical Latin: Its Origins and Character* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1957).

19 Crystal, “A Liturgical Language in a Linguistic Perspective,” 151–152. When Crystal goes on here to describe these linguistic features in detail, characterizing them as *generally* representative of Christian liturgical languages across history and cultures, his examples interestingly are taken from the traditional *Book of Common Prayer*, as apt for an Anglophone readership, and this despite his being himself a Catholic and a sometime consultant of ICEL.

cension, and coming again, that we might be more perfectly conformed here and now to this memory and to our eschatological hope hereafter.²⁰ Liturgy is *anamnetic* both in the specific sense of making present the Paschal Mystery but also in the more diffuse sense of remembering the whole of sacred history and the ongoing salvific experience of all those received and constituted in the universal Church by this one Eucharistic faith.²¹ Hence, insofar as language itself is the storehouse of sustaining memory, one can say that the words of liturgical worship also serve to recollect and evoke the ambient linguistic and historical context in which that saving grace has been operative for pilgrim peoples throughout the ages, for those scattered at Babel but now gathered by the indwelling Spirit in the unity of the Church and in the unifying culture of “the Church’s own way of speaking” (*ecclesiastica loquendi consuetudo*).²² Accordingly, I would suggest that the achievement of *Divine Worship* can be understood as a special application of this principle of linguistic *anamnesis* for the healing of schism, for the honor of a purified medium that nourished aspirations to Catholic unity, and for the enfolding of a particular liturgical patrimony that itself enfolds and contains in layered resonance the memory of salvation history in its Hebrew, Greek, and Latin expressions, all mediated through an idiom of English going back to the beginnings of our tongue’s first sustained liturgical use in the sixteenth century. The language of *Divine Worship*, including its characteristic archaisms, specialized vocabulary, and formulaic diction, with their roots in the historic Books of Common Prayer, could be said, at least for a particular pastoral constituency of converts in their ecclesial pilgrimage, to model and participate in the typological and paschal pattern of *exitus* (going forth) and *reditus* (coming home) with all the salient marks of the journey preserved intact.²³

Where the ecclesial context for appreciating the work of *Divine Worship*, as issuing from the period between the Second Vati-

20 Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2nd ed. (Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 2000) 1103, 1354, 1362.

21 See Joseph Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology: Building Stones for a Fundamental Theology*, trans. Mary Frances McCarthy (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1987) 293.

22 St. Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 93,3 (CCL 39:1303).

23 On the *exitus-reditus* schema in the context of sacred worship, see Joseph Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, trans. John Saward (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2000) 32–34.

can Council and *Liturgiam Authenticam* and into the pontificate of Benedict XVI, may help allay possible misgivings about the venture, the wider discussion of liturgical theology in recent decades also provides an important orientation for understanding how and why the Holy See judged this body of liturgical patrimony and its particular expressive dialect worthy of repatriation into the Roman Rite. The measured, sometimes spirited, assessment of the liturgical reforms ushered in by Vatican II has seen its fair share of controversy, but it has also stimulated a deeper exploration of the challenges of vernacular liturgy in tandem with an enriched appreciation of the Catholic Church's own patrimony of Latin liturgical prayer to help condition the Holy See's new-found openness to the kind of hieratic dialect inscribed in *Divine Worship*. Before moving on to a brief overview of Prayer Book English, it may be helpful to distill a few points from this wider discussion by way of outlining some principles relevant for appreciating the sacral language of *Divine Worship*:²⁴

1. Liturgical language is not so much a tool of edifying information as it is the simulacrum of divine encounter and revelation; it is not and has never been the diffuse idiom of everyday communication; rather it is the Church's focused, concentrated instrument of *mediation* to effect, to incarnate our *participation* in the saving mysteries of our faith and to immerse, to wash the faithful in the figural meanings of Holy Scripture.

24 The principles that follow claim no originality and are gleaned from the following, among others: Uwe Michael Lang, *The Voice of the Church at Prayer: Reflections on Liturgy and Language* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2012); Kevin W. Irwin, *What We Have Done, What We Have Failed to Do: Assessing the Liturgical Reforms of Vatican II* (New York: Paulist Press, 2013); Aidan Nichols, *Looking at the Liturgy: A Critical View of Its Contemporary Form* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1996); Jeremy Driscoll, "Conceiving the Translating Task: The Roman Missal and the Vernacular," in *The Voice of the Church: A Forum on Liturgical Translation* (Washington DC: United States Catholic Conference, 2001) 49–95; Bruce E. Harbert, "The Roman Rite and the English Language," *Antiphon* 9 (2005) 16–29; and Daniel B. Gallagher, "What Has Language to do with Beauty? The Philosophical Foundations of Liturgical Translations," in *Benedict XVI and the Roman Missal*, ed. Janet E. Rutherford and James O'Brien (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2013) 226–244.

2. Liturgical language is stylized, enacted speech with its own kind of mediated intelligibility, and far from excluding archaic elements it welcomes a modicum of traditional expressions and ritualized, formulaic conventions that “reach to the roots,” resonate in the auditory memory, and habituate an experience of worship wider, deeper, older than ourselves, transcending the gathered congregation in time and space to represent and configure our *incorporation* into the Communion of the Saints.
3. Liturgical language is recursive and immersive; it bears and demands repetition, day by day, week by week, season by season, year by year, without ever exhausting its capacity to stimulate meditation and work ongoing *conversion* of life; its words are “poetic” in the sense of being athletic, even ascetic, by gently, insistently stretching the limits of expression in order to exercise, train, tune, and elevate our faculties that we might lift up our hearts to God and open out our lives in love and service.

Nonetheless, it needs emphasizing that liturgical speech by itself, even at its best and richest, cannot achieve these ends without the necessary structures of authority, authentic unity of intention, and manifest bonds of communion that are more than merely notional or aspirational, something more than wishful thinking. Words, of course, signify their meanings in context, by authority and intention, according to their arrangement, occasion, purpose, and the attitude of their utterance (*ad placitum ex suppositione* in the phrase of medieval grammarians). Many of the same words that the Catholic Church now annexes to the Roman Rite have been prayed by Anglicans of one stripe or another under the banner of Protestant Establishment, sometimes with a pointedly anti-Catholic animus, or as a kind soothing word-music detachable from real belief, or as a badge of belonging to a nation or class, as a marker of “tribal” identity, freighted with all manner of sentiment and nostalgia.²⁵ That such associations

25 Elements of the Protestant wing of Anglicanism retain a reverence for the old *Book of Common Prayer* read through the lens of Reformed theology and Evangelical commitments (witness the publications of the Latimer Trust, for instance). An essentially agnostic, literary humanist appreciation of the Prayer Book is exemplified in Matthew Arnold; see his “A Psychological Parallel,” in *Matthew Arnold: Essays*

are rightly receding and can be yet overcome in the Catholic faith and in Catholic mission is, in some sense, the burden and the challenge of the liturgical provision for *Anglicanorum Coetibus*. Those from an Anglican background know that the rich words of the Prayer Book can fall flat and ring hollow when an otherwise lovely *lex orandi* is divorced from an authoritative *lex credendi* and leaves *lex vivendi* prey to the *zeitgeist* of “lifestyle politics,” setting souls adrift.

What a difference it makes to be fully, unambiguously Catholic, to cleave to the rock of Peter, to subscribe to the Magisterium, and to trust the pastoral solicitude of Holy Mother Church! When the Ordinariate faithful recite the familiar words of the Nicene Creed, “I believe one holy Catholic and Apostolic Church,” those words must mean something very different as Catholics than those same words once said as Anglicans. It makes a profound difference to pray the Mass with the Collect for Purity at the beginning and the Prayer of Thanksgiving at the end, clustered now *not* around an equivocal Prayer of Consecration (one not altogether clear about what exactly it is doing), but irradiating from the confidence of the Roman Canon and the power of the Holy Sacrifice. Such context can literally *transfigure* the significance of familiar words. To make good on the promise of *Divine Worship*, the ranks of erstwhile Anglicans who have become Ordinariate Catholics face the challenge of learning to read their Anglican history and to examine their habits and affections in a new key, a new context, not so much for the defensive retention of a “goodly heritage,” but to discover in its resources a new impetus for *transfiguring* mission in the fullness of the faith.

III PRAYER BOOK ENGLISH AND *DIVINE WORSHIP*

Liturgiam Authenticam sets out a striking challenge in assessing the suitability of liturgical language as a mode of missionizing inculturation: “liturgical prayer not only is formed by the genius of a culture, but itself contributes to the development of that culture.”²⁶ In cautioning against an “an overly servile adherence

Religious and Mixed, ed. Robert H. Super (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1972) 135–137. And for a soulful paean to the Prayer Book from the heart of certain kind of contemporary romantic Toryism, see Roger Scruton, *Our Church: A Personal History of the Church of England* (London: Atlantic Books, 2013) 96–100.

26 *Liturgiam Authenticam*, 47.

to prevailing modes of expression,” the Instruction notes that stable idioms of public worship can derive a certain vitality from the best, time-tested resources of each language: “works that are commonly considered ‘classics’ in a given vernacular language may prove useful in providing a suitable standard for its vocabulary and usage.”²⁷ While these norms offered some important, though necessarily circumscribed, guidance for the new English translation of the *Roman Missal* (hammered out just in the last decade), they also speak significantly to the rationale and motive that led the Holy See to tap into the linguistic sources of the Anglican tradition in making liturgical provision for the evangelizing work of the Ordinariates.

Nearly everyone agrees with the eminent historical linguists David Crystal and Ian Robinson that an enduring vernacular “religious English” first emerged in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries with the *Book of Common Prayer* (BCP) and the so-called Authorized Version (AV) or King James Version of the Bible.²⁸ These two books gave the English language a distinctive Christian voice, shaped the subsequent development of English prose, and have exerted a wide influence far beyond the ranks of practicing Christians.²⁹ Everyone agrees on that, but a regrettable imprecision creeps into common knowledge with the loose habit of characterizing the style of this religious vernacular as somehow typically “Tudor” or worse “Elizabethan,” and worse yet “Shakespearean.” The adjective “Tudor” and that clever compound

27 Ibid., 32.

28 See Ian Robinson, “Religious English,” in *The Survival of English: Essays in Criticism of Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973) 22–65; also his “The Prose and Poetry of the Book of Common Prayer,” in *The Book of Common Prayer: Past, Present & Future*, ed. Prudence Dailey (London: Continuum Books, 2011) 70–81; and David Crystal, *The Stories of English* (London: Allen Lane, 2004) 237–241, 278–279; together with his *Begat: The King James Bible and the English Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

29 On the literary and cultural influence of the *Book of Common Prayer*, see James Wood, “God Talk: The Book of Common Prayer at Three Hundred and Fifty,” in *The New Yorker* (22 October 2012): <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2012/10/22/god-talk>. See also Paul G. Stanwood, “The Prayer Book as Literature,” in *The Oxford Guide to the Book of Common Prayer*, ed. Charles Hefling and Cynthia Shattuck (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006) 140–149.

“Tudorbethan” are valid only as the vaguest historical shorthand for describing a linguistic register that actually stands in striking contrast to the common vernaculars of early modern England.³⁰ It is true that the first two Books of Common Prayer took shape in the Tudor reign of Edward VI, with few substantial revisions thereafter until the Stuart reign of Charles II in 1662. The King James Bible, of course, takes its name from the first Stuart monarch in 1611. Notably, the reign of Elizabeth I, in the period that gave us Shakespeare, contributed almost nothing significant to the dialect of “religious English,” at a time when the language was changing rapidly (probably more rapidly than today) with the fairly recent advent of mechanical printing and well before English grammar found the stability and standardization it was to acquire only in the latter part of the seventeenth century. On the contrary, the “golden age” sixteenth-century English literature did not so much contribute to as rather draw from this sacred vernacular which had been forged in the first half of the century and which would receive with the AV its biblical crystallization at the beginning of the seventeenth century.³¹ The point to grasp here is that the first BCPs and the original AV did not arise in a linguistic vacuum, but neither did they merely *reflect* or *imitate* a given, pre-existing English vernacular, certainly not everyday speech; rather these books served to *create* and *forge* what would become its own stable, enduring religious language, one that un-

30 On the many varieties of spoken and written English in the sixteenth century, see Charles Barber, *Early Modern English* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1976) 13–64.

31 In his *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1954) 204 ff., C. S. Lewis notes that the biblical translations of Tyndale and Coverdale, together with the distinctive style of the first Prayer Book (1549), emerged out of what he calls “the drab age” of English prose to fertilize and stimulate the flowering of literature that would issue in the expressive power of Shakespeare and his contemporaries. Ian Robinson, in *The Establishment of Modern English Prose in the Reformation and the Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), credits Cranmer’s translations and adaptations of the Latin Missal’s collects for the discovery and the veritable invention of coherent English syntax in the composition of the unified sentences: “So the well-formed sentence was developed in English not as a result of the activities of the Royal Society, to purify the language and make it fit for science, but to approach God” (103).

derwent a very slow, at times almost imperceptible, conservative, organic development in the centuries to follow, up to and including *Divine Worship*, not to mention the Revised Standard Version of the Bible in its Catholic Edition, itself heavily indebted and impressively faithful to the cadences of the King James Bible and now approved for liturgical use in the Ordinariates.³²

Yet the first BCP in 1549 and the AV in 1611 *already* sounded old-fashioned, even slightly archaic, when they were first published, and they did so deliberately in order to capture with the native resources of the English tongue the feel, the *gravitas*, the “givenness,” of much older texts.³³ The King James Bible, building upon yet improving Tyndale, Coverdale, and the Rheims New Testament (1582), shaped a new English prose precisely in simulating the stylistic features of the ancient Hebrew and Greek Scriptures, together with the Latin Vulgate. The first *Book of Common Prayer*, “understood of the people,”³⁴ yet more exalted, more stylized than their everyday speech, left behind the quaintly wooden cadences of late medieval English vernacular lay primers in order to adopt, adapt, and to stretch out in a new kind of English the distinctive rhythms, richness, and density of the Sarum Missal in Latin with its own roots in the ancient Roman sacramentaries. Tapping the wellsprings of the native voice with Anglo-Saxon origins together with the distinctive rhetoric of early Christian Latin, this supple language managed to sound vital and fresh by virtue of hearkening back to something ancient and venerable. This language is important for us today because it has proved itself enduring and fruitful and also because this dialect, including its stylized grammar and archaic expressions, is itself an example of those “elements of sanctification and truth” mentioned in *Anglicanorum Coetibus* – they are seeds of life which may have germinated outside the visible communion of the Catholic

32 A three-volume edition of this *Lectionary* was published “for use of the Holy See and the Dioceses of the Bishops’ Conferences of Botswana, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Nigeria, South Africa, Swaziland, Zimbabwe and of those countries where the Bishops have given approval” (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2012).

33 See Stella Brook, *The Language of the Book of Common Prayer* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965) 36–90, 106–108.

34 In the phrase of Article XXIV of the Thirty-Nine Articles; see G. Bray (ed.), *Documents of the English Reformation 1526–1701*, Corrected reprint (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co., 2004) 298.

Church but which Holy Mother Church now plants in her own good soil to promote future growth.

The word “Tudorbethan,” then, is not the most accurate name for the linguistic register of the historical Books of Common Prayer, now renewed in *Divine Worship*. Rather, this special mode of liturgical prayer is better termed “Prayer Book English,” for it held on beyond its “Tudor” origins to grow through many successive editions of the Prayer Book and to undergo over four centuries much adaptation, augmentation, and diffusion throughout the English-speaking world.³⁵ The later national Prayer Books changed over time (the long-winded exhortations and biddings of 1549 gradually fell away, the Eucharistic rite was restructured several times, and many new prayers were added, even as others were gently pruned, adjusted, and corrected), but what persisted and what came to characterize the distinctive Anglican way of praying was the tenacious retention of this august, rich, and rolling style. The style endured and endures, notwithstanding the fitful abandonment of traditional liturgical English in the worship books of the Anglican Communion beginning around 1971 with the Church of England’s *Alternative Services Series 3*.³⁶ The newer prayers added to the classic Prayer Book repertory, before the vogue for contemporary language, are sometimes derided as “mock-Tudor,” and one must admit that they are not all equal in quality or dignity (Cranmer’s own prayers were not all equally good either). But most of them successfully, seamlessly take their place to exemplify the *same* language, just as recently composed Latin orations fit into the modern *Missale Romanum* side-by-side with intact prayers dating back to the seventh-century Gelasian

35 On the incremental development of Prayer Book English beyond its “Tudor” origins into the twentieth century, see Brook, *The Language of the Book of Common Prayer* 192–219.

36 For some diverse and critical perspectives on the rationale and results of modern liturgical revision and contemporary language worship in the Anglican Communion, see Daniel B. Stevick, *Language in Worship: Reflections on a Crisis* (New York: Seabury Press, 1970); Barry Spurr, *The Word in the Desert: Anglican and Roman Catholic Reactions to Liturgical Reform* (Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 1995); and Peter Nicholas Davies, *Alien Rites? A Critical Examination of Contemporary English in Anglican Liturgies* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005). See also chapter 2, “Worship,” in Edward Norman, *Anglican Difficulties: A New Syllabus of Errors* (London: Morehouse, 2004) 16–28.

Sacramentary. The Ordinariate Missal features new collects for Pope St. John Paul II and Blessed John Henry Newman, among others, all in Prayer Book English, carefully “retro-fitted” for style with reference to the Latin texts and their modern English translations, but they are none the worse for that, and manage to speak in the same sacral accent that characterizes the rest of *Divine Worship*. But “style,” as here understood, is not just the particular linguistic properties of this or that prayer, but rather a function of the larger, sustained, recursive experience of liturgical worship, the orchestration and harmonization of the parts to the whole in a unified rite with its own integrity, continuity, and pastoral utility.

Yet the work of this style in the aggregate depends upon the local effects of its grammar, syntax, morphology, and vocabulary. A detailed survey of such linguistic features is not necessary here, but I will offer just a few observations on the special properties of Prayer Book English, most of which are familiar in operation and whose workings tend to function subliminally, irrespective of our technical grammatical knowledge. In addition to the aural qualities of dignity, sobriety, sonority, and balance, the Prayer Book’s sentences are famous for exhibiting the quality that C. S. Lewis called “pithiness.”³⁷ Like the ancient Roman collects that are their models, these sentences are like coiled springs compressing much expressive energy in little space. But to modern ears these same sentences often feel “spacious.” Both “pithy” and “spacious” at once, this special dialect takes voice in rich periodic sentences, built on patterns of subordination (with many relative clauses) and coordination (with frequent use of synonymous constructions and parataxis in doublets and triplets): “meek heart and due reverence;” “rest and quietness;” “all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works.” The native English habit of using two words to express a single multivalent idea (a convention going back to Anglo-Saxon times) also serves in Prayer Book English to illuminate the sense of specialized Latin loan-words through their coupling with common English equivalents, thereby enriching the meanings of both: “remission and forgiveness;” “love and charity;” “regenerate and born anew.”³⁸ The result is never amplitude for its own sake, but rather such expressions

37 Lewis, *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century* 217–220.

38 See Brook, *The Language of the Book of Common Prayer* 133.

serve as the sinews of a uniquely powerful tool of accumulative mediation, constantly shuttling between and bridging time and eternity, earth and heaven, sin and grace, the here-and-now with salvation history, while connecting, as well, the homely and the supernal, and linking the earthy coziness of simple English words with the lofty abstractions of Latin theology.

One familiar example will have to suffice. In the Prayer of Thanksgiving after Communion, the faithful give thanks that by virtue of the Sacrament, “we are very members incorporate in the mystical body of thy Son, the blessed company of all faithful people, and are also heirs through hope of thy everlasting kingdom.” Notice how the somewhat heavy and abstract Latinate phrase, slightly archaic on its own, “very members incorporate,” finds humble explication in the simple phrase, “the blessed company of all faithful people,” and then reaches for precise application from our hopeful inheritance of heavenly beatitude to the assurance of grace here and now “to continue in that holy fellowship and do all such works as thou hast prepared for us to walk in.” The passage, in context, is not so much *descriptive* as *demonstrative* – it enacts what it says even as it summons the faithful to participate in a like enactment; it lifts us to heaven and then brings us back to earth, changed and equipped, perhaps even *transfigured* in a pledge taken on trust to live out the efficacy of the Sacrament. This kind of “performative speech,” I think, is one of the keys to understanding how the Prayer Book has managed to instill and nourish a deeply sacramental worldview.³⁹

Much has been written on how Prayer Book English affords a resonant sounding-board for mediating and appropriating the language of Holy Scripture.⁴⁰ The Bible, of course, is thickly wo-

39 See John Shoulson, *Newman and the Common Tradition: A Study in the Language of Church and Society* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), for an account of the *fiduciary* functions of religious language in a sacramental economy: “In religion, as in poetry, we are required to make a complex act of inference and assent, and we begin by taking on *trust* expressions which are usually in analogical, metaphorical, or symbolic form, and by acting out the claims they make” (4).

40 See, for examples, *The Bible in the Book of Common Prayer, 1662 & 1928* (London: SPCK, 1940); Henry Ives Bailey, *The Liturgy compared with the Bible* (London: Rivingtons, 1833). The standard Prayer Book commentaries are useful for excavating the many embedded scriptural allusions: Charles Neil and J. M. Willoughby, *The Tutorial Prayer Book*

ven into the very fabric of the Prayer Book's cadences, and it is thus knit not as a source of "proof-texts" or an historical-critical data-set or as therapeutic didacticism, but as the very poetry of God's presence and action among us, unfolded in all its typological and figural richness. It is no accident that sensibilities shaped by the old Prayer Books take so readily to the biblical poetics of the early Church Fathers.⁴¹ Though liturgical language should evince a certain consistency of register, the language of worship welcomes some stylistic variation, like Scripture itself, in its parts and their different functions. *Divine Worship* displays a graduated modulation of styles of traditional English: the readings (largely instructional and edifying) show the lucid intelligibility and accuracy of the RSV Bible in its Catholic Edition; the orations, next, speak clearly but with a measure of rhetorical figuration (like the Latin originals); while the Mass antiphons and psalm texts provide a more poetic counterpoint and hence exhibit a greater degree of archaic diction and stylized syntax. *Divine Worship* makes the most of this modulated scriptural resonance through a rich provision for minor propers, following not only the precedent of the *Roman Missal* but also the tradition of the so-called Anglican missals of weaving "devotional enrichments" into the unadorned *Book of Common Prayer*.

The place of the Coverdale Psalter in *Divine Worship*, as in the classic Prayer Books, deserves some special mention. Ever since its inclusion in the 1662 BCP, its lyrical rhythms have punctuated traditional Prayer Book Worship and inspired a rich body of music. Some biblical scholars might complain that the Coverdale Psalter is not the most slavishly accurate of translations from the

(London: Harrison Trust, 1913); Francis Procter and Walter Howard Frere, *A New History of the Book of Common Prayer* (London: Macmillan, 1955); Massey Hamilton Shepherd, *The Oxford American Prayer Book Commentary* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1950); and Marion J. Hatchett, *Commentary on the American Prayer Book* (New York: Seabury Press, 1981).

41 Illustrated in the seventeenth-century Caroline Divines, among others, this Anglican penchant for biblical figuralism is also exemplified in E. B. Pusey's 1836 *Lectures on Types and Prophecies* (attended by Newman). See Shoulson, *Newman and the Common Tradition* 67-68. See also Geoffrey Rowell, "Making the Church of England Poetical: Ephraim and the Oxford Movement," in *Hugoye: Journal of Syriac Studies* 2 (1999) 111-129.

Hebrew, but no other English rendering manages so effectively to convey the musical clausulae of ancient Jewish lyrical poetry and its constant change-ringing parallelism with a vocabulary in many cases that is more readily intelligible and certainly more suited to singing and oral proclamation than most modern translations of the psalms.⁴²

Liturgiam Authenticam instructs scrupulous care in the vernacular translation of personal pronouns and the attendant inflection of verbs to convey accurately and precisely the sense of the original Latin liturgical texts.⁴³ The document has mainly in mind the dangers of so-called “gender-inclusive language.” Happily, that is not a worry for *Divine Worship*. Fortuitously, though, *Liturgiam Authenticam* does imply a positive valuation of a rich and subtle resource of Prayer Book English preserved in *Divine Worship* – namely, the use of “thou” and “thee” to designate the second-person singular, in contrast to the second-person plural “you.” This is the distinction between the Latin “*tu*” and “*vos*” as retained in many modern European languages but altogether lost in contemporary idiomatic English (except in parts of the American South where folks know to distinguish between “you,” singular, and “y’all,” plural). There is a popular misunderstanding that use of “thou” and “thee” is simply an exalted, honorific way of addressing God Almighty in His loftiness. But, in fact, the second-person singular “thou” also signifies the familiar, affectionate, and intimate form of address, as opposed to the more formal, more distant “you.”⁴⁴ Interestingly, nearly all regular Eng-

42 For a detailed stylistic analysis of the Prayer Book Psalter, and its differences both from Coverdale’s original 1535 text and from the Authorized Version’s Psalms, see Brook, *The Language of the Book of Common Prayer* 148–171: she notes, *inter alia*, the Psalter’s fidelity to the Vulgate and hence its retention of Septuagintal readings that are uniquely resonant in the Catholic liturgical tradition (150); the richly musical handling of parallelism (158–159); and the Psalter’s contribution to the distinctive cadences of the Prayer Book “by a willingness to use very simple words, skilfully placed, and a willingness to repeat phrases” (170). See also David Daniell, *The Bible in English: Its History and Influence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003) 181–183, 189.

43 *Liturgiam Authenticam*, 30, 31.

44 See Brook, *The Language of the Book of Common Prayer* 53–56; Crystal, *The Stories of English* 307–310; and Barber, *Early Modern English* 208–210.

lish-speaking Catholics to this day feel no distance at all from God in praying the *Our Father* and the *Hail Mary*, those most intimate and memorable of prayers, long hallowed with these same traditional hieratic pronouns. Yet at the same time, “thou” is still reverential and finds in Prayer Book English, as in *Divine Worship*, some special, limited application also to individual human persons in the unique intimacy of sacramental action: “I baptize thee in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit;” “The Body of our Lord Jesus Christ preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life;” “With this ring I thee wed.”⁴⁵ The use of “thou” and “thee,” then, is not simply ornamental but rather functional in bearing witness to the inter-subjective mystery of personhood, the I-Thou relationship so richly pondered in Martin Buber’s famous book of that title.⁴⁶ Mainly, though, we address God as “thou” because He is *one* God in the mystery of the holy Trinity, but we also address God as “thou” because He is closer, more intimate, to us than we are to our own selves. Not everyone will immediately or fully understand these distinctions, to be sure, but in the recursive, immersive experience of worship they can imperceptibly operate their subliminal effects all the same. These are nuances of Prayer Book English that work not only “above the measure” of everyday speech (in Tolkien’s phrase)⁴⁷ but also “below the surface,” so to speak, subtly to tune the ear, and to train the heart for a deeper apprehension of the Trinitarian theology of God’s self-revelation *and* for the greater honor of human persons made and redeemed in His image and likeness.

Though tested and proven over nearly five hundred years, the sacral language of *Divine Worship* has yet to disclose the measure of its evangelizing and sanctifying potential in the fullness of Catholic communion. It has yet to demonstrate its capacity,

45 On the Prayer Book’s delicately functional modulation between forms of the second-person singular pronoun, familiar (“thou”) and formal (“you”), see Brook, *The Language of the Book of Common Prayer* 54–55.

46 See Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, trans. Ronald Gregor Smith (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1937). For a Catholic personalist complement to Buber more immediately relevant to liturgical formation, see Dietrich von Hildebrand, *Liturgy and Personality* (New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1943).

47 *The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien*, ed. Humphrey Carpenter (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2000) 298.

as a pastoral variation of the Roman Rite, for making possible again in our own time and for new generations what Romano Guardini called “the liturgical act,” a prospect perhaps more difficult today and more imperative than ever before the Church’s history.⁴⁸ *Anglicanorum Coetibus* is an audacious venture in realized ecumenism, a daring pledge in the new evangelization, and its success will require more than a collection of liturgical texts. It will demand and hopefully call forth the right kind of catechesis and explanation; it will depend upon effective preaching, dedicated pastoral care, and a particular way of modeling parish life and the apostolate of the laity, all of which are equally valuable components of Anglican patrimony; and it will require singular confidence, charity, and courtesy in living out a special liturgical charism, bravely yet humbly, as a natural, normal way of being Catholic in these challenging times. The clergy and faithful of the Ordinariates have the special responsibility of using their formative heritage in a new key — now indeed with the power of the keys — to form others for the future, that the good seed, which having in the past fallen among the stones or in shallow soil, may now find rich ground to bear fruit and yield a harvest hundredfold.

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48 See Robert E. Barron’s reflections on Guardini’s 1964 letter *Der Kultakt und die Gegenwärtige Aufgabe der Liturgischen Bildung* in “The Liturgical Act and the Church of the Twenty-first Century,” in *Bridging the Great Divide: Musings of a Post-Liberal, Post-Conservative Evangelical Catholic* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004) 53–66.