

To all the pastors of the Evangelical Lutheran Diocese of North America. For the purpose of discussion, that we might work toward a common consensus regarding the language of a new diocesan hymnal.

“In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy _____”

The pastor’s first words to his people in the Divine Service are important words, baptismal words, words of blessing and of invocation: “In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.”

Or “Holy Spirit,” depending on which hymnal you use.

We and our members (if not every one of our visitors) know perfectly well what we mean, whether we say “Ghost” or “Spirit.” We are all referring to the same Person of the Holy Trinity, who is known to King James (KJ) readers of Matthew 28:19 as the “Holy Ghost” and who is known to Present-Day English (PDE) Bible readers as the “Holy Spirit.” Those who use TLH hear “Holy Ghost” every Sunday, because TLH is consistent with the KJ Bible,¹ which was the English Bible overwhelmingly used by English-speaking Lutherans in 1941 when that hymnal was published. Those who use *Lutheran Worship* or *Lutheran Service Book* (or *Christian Worship* or *Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary* or virtually any Lutheran hymnal published since 1982) hear “Holy Spirit,” because those hymnals are based on PDE Bibles, whether the NIV, NKJV, ESV, or some combination of modern English translations, since very few American Lutheran churches still use the KJV as their primary version of the Bible.

The connection between the Bibles(s) we read and the language of our worship is reciprocal. The language in which we hear God speak to us informs the language we use to speak back to God in prayer, praise, and confession of faith.

If you would indulge a bit of personal history...

My first church memories are from about 1978, when my WELS congregation was still reading from the KJV and still using TLH. Within a year, the complete NIV was first published, and within a few years, it became almost universally used within the WELS. Catechetical materials based on the NIV became available at almost the same time, but it took until 1993 for a hymnal to be produced that reflected the NIV language. In those intervening years, I remember thinking it strange to be reading or hearing a modern English translation at home, at school, and from the pulpit, but speaking KJ language from the pew and hearing KJ language from the chancel. For all its flaws, the 1993 WELS hymnal made the edifying connection again between our Bible and our worship. Our Bibles, our catechisms, and our hymnal all read the same, starting with the invocation: “In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”

¹ As I will note below, the language of TLH is actually borrowed largely from the Book of Common Prayer of 1549, which was based on the Matthew-Tyndale Bible (1535) and The Great Bible (1539), since the KJV wasn’t published until 1611. However, the two versions are so similar in the passages used for our worship that it seems convenient for our purposes to refer to the KJV, given that our churches are mostly unfamiliar with the Tyndale and Great Bible translations.

My congregation in Las Cruces, founded in 1987, began with the NIV as their primary Bible, TLH as their hymnal. Soon after the WELS hymnal was published in 1993, I'm told they wrestled with making the change from TLH to *Christian Worship* (CW), and eventually decided unanimously to make the switch, as did the overwhelming majority of WELS congregations. When I arrived in 2007, the use of the NIV and CW was well-established.

But in 2010, the publishers of the NIV announced a new revision of the NIV which would replace the previous revision from 1984.² The NIV 2011 would make several unacceptable revisions,³ prompting some of us in the WELS to investigate alternate translations in earnest, delving into the Hebrew and Greek, the Latin and German, and comparing various Bible translations. In doing so, it became clear to me that even the NIV 1984 translation which we had been using was not the best option for accuracy. The ESV proved superior in several ways, and the NKJV proved even better in other ways. So we settled on using primarily the NKJV in our services and in our catechesis, though we still refer to various translations during our Bible study.

When my congregation and I left the WELS in October, 2012, we were still using CW for worship. We continued to use it for another year. I had already noticed that the novel liturgical forms of CW were deficient, the Psalms were mutilated, and the hymns poorly revised and unhappily abridged, and solid Lutheran hymns were missing. We also found it uncomfortable using a hymnal that was directly tied to the synod that had treated Christ's doctrine (and us) so shamefully. During that time, we happened to receive a shipment of dozens of free TLHs from a generous donor in California. We were aware that several congregations of the diocese were using TLH, and it was not so directly tied any longer to a single heretical synod, since the Synodical Conference that published it had disbanded and each of the member synods had already moved away from it to its own publication. So, for the above-mentioned reasons, our congregation decided to switch to TLH at the end of 2013, until a new hymnal became available.

One of the most difficult parts of that switch for many of us was going back to KJ language in our worship, and, to some extent, in our hymns. We were using the NKJV as our Bible for worship. Some of our members had never seen TLH before and were entirely unfamiliar with the KJ Bible and language. But we knew that all Lutheran hymnals produced after 1980 had left behind most or all of the KJ language, especially in the liturgy, and we also knew that the ELDoNA was not a "KJV only" church body, so we were encouraged that, someday, we would "endeavor, by common consensus," as it says in the Malone Theses, to work toward a new hymnal that would again make clear the edifying connection between the language of our Bible and the language of our worship.

That has been my justification for using the KJ language of TLH for the past eight years. It was always my assumption that our liturgy would eventually be "translated" to PDE, based on the premise that the language of our worship should flow from our

² This is the inherent danger in relying on any publishing house to provide us with the Word of God.

³ Including hypersensitivity to gender and to anti-Semitism, the removal of key theological words like "saint," etc.

Scriptures, since our whole faith flows from Holy Scripture, and since the words of our worship are drawn heavily from words, phrases, and sometimes entire verses of Scripture. Still, it was an assumption; no one ever told me explicitly that a new hymnal would discontinue the use of KJ language. Since this is a decision that has yet to be made for the Church Order of the diocese, I offer here my best arguments for bringing the language of our worship closer in line with the language of our Bibles.

Argument #1: We have already moved away from KJ English to PDE in the Bible translations we use for worship.

By “KJ English,” I mean especially those obsolete words (e.g., “anon, bewray, leasing, trow, implead, quicken, etc.”), verb forms (“spake, holpen”) and the use of those pronouns (“thou, thee, thy, thine, mine, ye”) and their corresponding verb endings (“thou lovest, thou didst, he giveth, etc.”) which have fallen entirely out of use in PDE.

Since the 5th century AD, the English language has undergone several major stages of development, from Old English (450-1100 AD, mostly a Germanic dialect) to Middle English (1100-1500, Germanic mixed with French) to Early Modern English (1500-1700, the language of King James and Shakespeare) to Modern English (1700-present). By the 17th century, “thee/thou” had taken on an informal and sometimes contemptuous connotation, depending on the context (like the Spanish *tú*), while “ye/you” was either plural (referring to more than one) or formal (referring to one or more individuals politely or respectfully). Already by the mid-1600’s the use of thee/thou was declining, being replaced by “you” as the singular pronoun, as the formal/informal distinction was falling out of use in English. By the year 1800, practically no one retained “thee/thou” language in their common speech.

But, as we know, it lingered in the majestic poetry of Shakespeare (and much subsequent poetry inspired by Shakespeare), in the widely accepted KJ Bible, and in the worship that flowed from the KJ Bible.

It is not my intention here to provide an extensive rationale or defense for the monumental shift from the KJV to various PDE Bibles that took place between the 1950’s and the 1980’s. I simply wish to acknowledge it, as most if not all of us already do in our regular public Scripture readings. I will say, without a hint of criticism for those who used the KJV in the 1940’s, that it was a very Lutheran thing, to offer the Scriptures to the people in the actual language of the people.⁴

I say, “a Lutheran thing,” because it is what Luther very intentionally did with his own German translation of the Bible, which all Lutheran churches in Germany happily adopted as their own. This is what Luther had to say about Bible translation, as he defended his use of the word *allein* (“alone”) in Romans 3:28:

⁴ It would have been an even more Lutheran thing to do not to depend on Baptist or Reformed translators and publishers to provide it, since their translations were not untainted by their theology. As Luther also wrote in his letter on translation: “Ah, translating is not everyone’s skill as some mad saints imagine. It requires a right, devout, honest, sincere, God-fearing, Christian, trained, educated, and experienced heart. So I hold that no false Christian or sectarian spirit can be a good translator.”

We do not have to ask the literal Latin how we are to speak German, as these [papist] donkeys do. Rather we must ask the mother in the home, the children on the street, the common man in the marketplace. We must be guided by their language, by the way they speak, and do our translating accordingly. Then they will understand it and recognize that we are speaking German to them.⁵

At some point, English Bibles were bound to come into the language of the people who read them and heard them without requiring people to learn an obsolete dialect of their own language which they would use exclusively as a “Bible language” or as a “church language.” The Hebrew of the Old Testament, the Greek of the LXX and of the New Testament, the Latin of the Vulgate, the German of Luther’s Bible, and the KJ English of the KJ Bible all reflected the common⁶ language of the people who were the intended readers and hearers of them at the time when they were written. When the language undergoes a substantial shift, as English has done since 1611, a revision is both natural and beneficial.

This is not to say that all revisions of the KJ have been undertaken for the mere purpose of putting the words of God into the common language of the readers. The nineteenth century saw a very different purpose for revising the KJ Bible, namely, to shatter what “modern scholars” of the time viewed as the faulty foundation of the KJ Bible: the Textus Receptus (TR), the New Testament Greek manuscripts that served as the basis for the King James Version and for Luther’s German translation. Without going into detail here, the so-called Critical Text (CT) began to be pieced together in the nineteenth century and has been under regular revision since that time. Practically every English translation of the KJV since 1900 has been based on the CT, including the NIV and the ESV. The NKJV is the great exception, along with the more recent Modern English Version (MEV), while the Evangelical Heritage Version (EHV), very recently produced by the WELS, picks and chooses from the TR and from the CT.

Another reason for revisions to the King James Bible in the nineteenth century was theological. Perhaps the most notable example of this is the “inspired revision” of Joseph Smith, the infamous founder of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. Smith’s corruptions of the text⁷ of the KJV likely served as a deterrent for the next century of Christians who may have desired to modernize (in a good sense) the language of their Scriptures, but who feared being lumped into the same sectarian camp as Smith.

In any case, revisions have occurred, some for the better, some for the worse, and most of them a mixture of improvements of some passages and poorer translations of others. But

⁵ Translated from “Ein sendbrief D. M. Luthers. Von Dolmetzschen und Fürbit der heiligenn” in Dr. Martin Luthers Werke, (Weimar: Hermann Boehlaus Nachfolger, 1909), Band 30, Teil II, pp. 632-646. Revised and annotated by Michael D. Marlowe, June 2003.

⁶ Which is why the Greek of the New Testament is known as *Koine* (“common”) Greek, and the Latin translation is known as the Vulgate, from the Latin *vulgatus* (“common”).

⁷ One need look no further than John 1:1 to see how Smith corrupted Holy Scripture to fit his theology. “In the beginning was the gospel preached through the Son. And the gospel was the word, and the word was with the Son, and the Son was with God, and the Son was of God.” And any Lutheran who may have wanted to reflect more of Luther’s German Bible in English would surely have been fearful of being compared to Joseph Smith, who “translated” Romans 3:28 much as Luther did: “Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith alone without the deeds of the law.”

we are not at the beginning of an era, so that we must decide whether or not to move away from KJ English to PDE in our Bibles. We are not even in the middle of that era, as if half of our churches still used the KJV while the other half used a PDE Bible. No, the shift is virtually complete.

Having said that, no one can blame today's older generations of English-speaking Christians for having grown attached to the words of the KJ Bibles with which they were raised. By the same token, no one can blame the younger generations of English-speaking Christians who have appreciated hearing, reading, speaking, and praying the words of God in their own native tongue and dialect. One hopes, in either case, that it is the meaning of the words of God that really draws Christians to those words, not the stylistic form or perceived beauty produced by the English translator. I would argue, for example, that the Christmas Gospel from Luke 2 is, objectively speaking, just as compelling and just as beautiful, and more importantly, just as powerful and effective, whether it is read from the KJV or from a PDE Bible.

I am not here suggesting that a single PDE Bible translation be chosen for our diocese. The fact is, no modern translation has the weight and authority that the KJV once did, so that it serves as the obvious default translation for English-speaking Christians. All PDE Bibles have their strengths and their weaknesses, just as the KJV does.

Argument #2: The language of our worship should flow from our Scriptures, because the words of our worship are derived from the Scriptures.

We know that most of the texts of our worship are not original to the English language. Nearly all the language (that is, the words and phrases) of our worship is derived or borrowed from Scripture, including the canticles that were originally composed in Latin. Even where the words and phrases do not come directly from Scripture, the language (that is, the form of English) of the prayers is certainly consistent with the language of the Bible translation in use.

That was certainly the case in 1549 when the Anglicans first published the Book of Common Prayer, from which much of the verbiage of TLH is derived. The Anglicans based their prayer book on the English Bible(s) they had in 1549, which were the Matthew-Tyndale Bible (1535) and its revisions, and The Great Bible (1539), both of which were precursors to the KJV of 1611.

In *The Order of the Holy Communion*, TLH page 15, the words and phrases are quoted or borrowed from some 146 verses of the KJ Bible,⁸ not counting the Propers or the General Prayer. In *The Order of Vespers*, TLH page 41 (with *Magnificat*), there are references to or quotations from some 31 verses of the KJ Bible.

In *The Order of Matins*, TLH page 32 (excluding *Te Deum*), there are references to some 30 verses of the KJ Bible. The English *Te Deum* on pages 35-37 is a translation of the ancient Latin prayer. That Latin prayer also included several Biblical allusions but was more of an original composition than any other song of the liturgy. Nevertheless, the

⁸ I have compiled a list of these in another document, if anyone is interested in seeing it.

English translation offered in TLH is unmistakably provided in KJ English, making it fully consistent with the KJ language of the rest of the hymnal.

The same goes for the Collects, the General Prayers, and all the rites of TLH. They are all consistent with the form of English used in the KJ Bible, even where the phrases are not drawn directly from the Bible.

Just as the language of TLH was consistent with the KJ Bible, the primary Bible in use among Lutherans in 1941, so the Lutheran hymnals that have been published since then have all followed the primary Bible in use when they were published. *Lutheran Worship* (1982) and *Christian Worship* (1993/2021) generally follow the NIV. *Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary* (1996) follows the NKJV. And *Lutheran Service Book* (2006) generally follows the ESV. Other translations may be used here and there in these hymnals, but the language of the liturgy is generally consistent with the language of the primary Bible on which the hymnal is based.

There are two notable exceptions to this. In LSB, one of the five settings of the Divine Service (Setting 3) intentionally retains KJ language in much of the service, although it uses PDE in the Invocation, the Confession and Absolution, the Nicene Creed, the Proper Preface, the Prayer of Thanksgiving after Communion, and the Benediction. And in every newer hymnal, a KJ form of the Lord's Prayer is retained, either as the sole form or as an alternate form.

Since the language of our worship depends so heavily on the Scriptures, and since the KJ Bible is no longer the primary Bible in use among us and hasn't been for some time, I believe it only makes sense to use the language of our PDE Bibles in our worship. The NKJV seems to me, for the most part, to be an acceptable basis for this, although I would recommend alternate translations in certain places and perhaps for certain Psalms. Regardless, the language differences among modern translations are relatively subtle, while KJ English and PDE are noticeably different dialects of English.

Argument #3: Using Present-Day English in our worship would provide the clearest confession to the congregations and communities we serve.

With some exceptions, those members of our congregations over 50 years old grew up hearing mainly the KJV from the pulpit (assuming they grew up in the Lutheran Church). Those in their 40s grew up hearing some KJV from the pulpit. Those under 40 have grown up hearing no KJV from the pulpit, unless their church body was a "KJV only" church body, like the Concordia Lutheran Conference (CLC). Those using older editions of the Small Catechism have learned the text of the Catechism in KJ English, accompanied by KJV memory passages. Those using PDE Small Catechisms have learned the Catechism in PDE. Before we switched to TLH at the end of 2013, the only time my own children had ever encountered the name "Holy Ghost" was in the hymn section of *Christian Worship*. The point is, we have a mixture of people in our diocese with varying degrees of familiarity with KJ English.

Meanwhile, our communities are made up of a growing majority of people who have never read from the KJV and whose level of education may have never exposed them to

Shakespearean English. This is especially true in areas where English is not the first language of many. Going forward, we can only expect that number to increase.

If we were discussing the works of Shakespeare, I would encourage people to familiarize themselves with Early Modern English, so that they could appreciate Shakespeare in his native dialect. A “translation” of Shakespeare’s original work of art into modern English would seem absurd. It would also be unnecessary, since our eternal life does not depend on understanding or appreciating Shakespeare.

That is not the case, however, with Holy Scripture, which is not an original English work of art and which is the very source of our eternal life. Despite the literary greatness of the Bible, its authors did not set out to compose a Hebrew or a Greek “work of art” to be admired by those who could manage to learn the language. They passed down the Word of God to mankind in the language of the people to whom they wrote, so that, in this New Testament era, it might be translated over and over again through the ages for the benefit of all nations and all generations.

In choosing to read PDE translations from the pulpit, we have already acknowledged, in practice, that the clearest testimony of the Word of God is given to the people in their own language. If they are accustomed to hearing and reading modern Bible translations, then they will be better able to make the connections between the Word of God and the worship of God when the language of our worship is consistent with the language of our Bibles. This would make for the clearest confession to those whom we serve, rather than to intentionally maintain an artificial distinction between the language of God’s Word and the language of our worship.

What is more, if the language of our worship is consistent with the language of our Bibles, then the people we serve, both members and visitors, will not be distracted or given occasion to stumble over obsolete forms, from “thee/thou” to “Ghost” to “spake” to “holpen” to “the quick and the dead” to “world without end,” all of which forms come directly from the KJV but are absent from all modern English Bibles.

Argument #4: Using Present-Day English in our worship would teach people better how to pray in their own language.

Many of us regularly lament the modern Evangelical’s use of novel prayer forms. “Lord, I just wanna...” “Father God...” “I claim this, I bind that! Power, I release you!” What is the problem with these forms? The problem is not their informality per se, but that they are so foreign to the way Scripture and the Church have taught us to pray, and in some cases, they actually suggest false understandings of the teaching of Scripture.

How do we help our people avoid such novel and ill-informed expressions? By providing them with better patterns for their prayers. I am not here referring mainly to the Lord’s Prayer, which is a prayer unto itself, but to the Psalms, to our Collects, to prayers we have received from Luther or our Lutheran Fathers, not in such a way that our people are bound to pray at home using only those words, but so that they may have useful patterns for making their own prayers.

No matter how many Collects our people hear in King James English, I do not think they are likely to start making their own prayers in King James English. I know that I, for

my part, would find such language awkward and unnatural, as well as unnecessary. But if our people are regularly hearing the Psalms, the Collects, and Luther's Prayers, etc., in their own PDE language, then they have a much steadier foundation upon which to build with their own petitions and requests as they learn edifying words, phrases, doxologies, and forms of address that they can actually use and imitate.

Argument #5: Using Present-Day English in our worship would correct a false piety associated with Thee's and Thou's.

I still recall some of the arguments people made when the WELS was transitioning between TLH and CW.

(1) "It's disrespectful to refer to God as 'You.' 'Thee/Thou' is more fitting." (Never mind that the pastor is addressed with "thy" in the Salutation, and the people are addressed with "thee" in the Benediction.)

This argument reflects a faulty and historically inaccurate sentiment which is better corrected than indulged.

(2) "The KJ language is loftier, more dignified, more other-worldly. The language of our worship should be sacred, different than the language we regularly speak."

The concept of "sacral language," that is, a sacred language reserved for Scripture or uniquely appropriate for worship, is somewhat of an anomaly that has developed among English-speaking Christians due to the extended time-period over which the King James Bible has been used. What would have sounded more or less natural to those who lived in the early 17th century has come to sound ancient or even exotic to ears in the 21st century, lending it also a sense of nostalgia. This perception of "ancientness" or "otherness" in the language itself may seem like a desirable goal to some, but it is not a principle or practice found in Scripture or the early Church. It certainly had no place among German-speaking Lutherans, nor was it apparently known to the Old Testament prophets or to the New Testament apostles. The notion that KJ English is more pious than PDE does not come from God, but from somewhere else. It ought to be corrected, not promoted. Language, like most things, can become an idol.

But if anyone finds benefit in a sense of "ancientness" or "otherness" in our worship, we already have it. We have it in the very texts of the liturgy, in the readings from Scripture, regardless of the translation, in the modern translations of ancient texts from the Hebrew, Greek, Latin, German, etc., in all the interactions between pastor and people, none of which are "common." They are all serious and weighty and different enough from our normal interactions that anyone should be able to detect that our sanctuaries are far from an extension of our living rooms; they are places where the Lord comes to meet with His dear people.

Argument #6: Using Present-Day English in our worship would avoid the appearance of elitism and sectarianism.

Something I've long witnessed in certain corners of the LCMS is the notion that the use of TLH (with its KJ language in particular) is practically a mark of Lutheran orthodoxy, almost a boasting point for a pastor or congregation. (If that notion was ever common in the

WELS, it was before my time.) It always saddened me to see discussions turn in this elitist direction. One can make valid arguments for the flaws in various hymnals, but that ought not lead to condescension or to boasting, especially on the basis of the false premise that an obsolete dialect of English is superior to our modern dialect.

At one point, decades ago, when the KJV was the main Bible in use among Lutherans, it may have seemed sectarian to move away from the KJV and from KJ language in worship. But now that PDE translations have become so prevalent and modern English is being used so widely among Lutherans in worship, is there a risk of appearing sectarian if we intentionally choose to produce a new hymnal in a language that few others are using and that we've already abandoned in our Bibles?

Argument #7: Using Present-Day English in our worship would give us the opportunity to clarify doctrinal points and Scriptural connections that were obscured by the KJV.

(1) “Holy Ghost vs. Holy Spirit.” When St. Peter addressed the crowds in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost, he made the connection to Joel’s prophecy, who prophesied that God would pour out His “Spirit” (KJV) on all flesh. Peter then says this was being fulfilled as the Holy “Ghost” (KJV) was poured out on the disciples. In Greek, he uses the same word, but the KJ translators opted for different words, though referring to the same Person of the Holy Trinity. The term “Holy Ghost” is used 90 times by the KJV, all in the New Testament. In the Old Testament, He is referred to as the “Spirit” or the “holy Spirit,” never as the Holy Ghost. I find this most unhelpful. I can see no good reason why the same word, referring to the same Person, should be translated differently, leading one to wonder how the “Spirit” of the Old Testament is related to the “Ghost” of the New. Since all modern English translations use “Spirit” consistently, I think it is most wise to reflect this also in the language of our worship in order to clarify that which the KJV obscured.

(2) The “Create in Me” in TLH is a word-for-word quotation of Psalm 51:10-12 from the KJV. The second half of verse 12 in the KJV reads: “and uphold me with thy free spirit.” Is this referring directly to the Holy Spirit? The “thy” makes it seem so. But there is no “thy” in the original Hebrew, or in the LXX, or in the Vulgate, or in Luther’s translation. In fact, when one reads Lutheran commentary on this verse, it is usually explained as Melancthon explained it in his *Loci* (1543): “That is, give me a willing spirit which does not flee from conflict and dangers and “strengthen me.”⁹ (Also quoted in Chemnitz) And again, “Increase my strength in my afflictions so that I can bear them and willingly obey You and not depart from You in raging and doubt concerning Your mercy, as Saul did.”^{10 11}

Also, the word “free” has been variously translated. The NKJV renders it “generous” (referring to the Holy Spirit). MEV, “Your willing spirit (lowercase!).” EHV, ESV, NRSV, NIV, “a willing spirit.” This last translation would better reflect the Hebrew meaning and the explanations given by Melancthon, Chemnitz, Luther, and Bugenhagen, leaving us

⁹ Philip Melancthon and Jacob A. O. Preus, *Loci Communes*, 1543, electronic ed. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1992), 107.

¹⁰ *ibid.*, p. 182.

¹¹ This was also Luther’s understanding, cf. LW:14:172.

with, “And uphold me with a willing spirit.” In a verse that is so often sung by our people, I believe accuracy of translation and of thought is even more important than in other passages.

(3) The Nunc Dimittis in TLH is also quoted directly from the KJV’s rendering of Luke 2:29-32. Here there are two phrases which could be improved. The NKJV rightly adds an “s” to “people,” better reflecting the Greek and catching the contrast between the “peoples,” that is, the Gentile peoples + the Jewish people. “Which You have prepared before the face of all peoples.” This is a minor improvement, but again, in a verse so often sung, it is especially important to be accurate.

The last verse is also obscure in the KJV: “A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.” The Greek is somewhat ambiguous. Is Christ two things: (1) a Light for the Gentiles and (2) the Glory of Israel (cf. KJV, NKJV, MEV, EHV)? Or is Christ a Light which has two purposes (both expressed by the single preposition *eis*): for the enlightening of the Gentiles and for the glory of Israel (ESV, NRSV, NIV)? I believe the grammar leans toward the latter interpretation, which is also how Luther takes it in his translation. I believe the best rendering of this verse would be: “A Light for enlightening the Gentiles, and for the glory of Your people, Israel.”

(4) “World without end.” This phrase, used at the end of the Gloria Patri, Nunc Dimittis, and most collects, is only used twice in the KJV and is one of the ways it renders the Greek phrase, τοῦ αἰῶνος τῶν αἰώνων (Eph. 3:21) and ἕως τοῦ αἰῶνος (Is. 45:17, LXX). Elsewhere, the KJV renders the phrase, “for ever.” While the 16th century Anglicans seemed fond of “world without end,” it does not mean “forever” in modern English. I believe there is no benefit in retaining this obsolete phrase and much benefit in using a word all our members and visitors understand well. If it is desirable to retain the same number of syllables for certain canticles, then the word “forevermore” would satisfy the requirement.

(5) Credal language. There are a few phrases in the Nicene Creed drawn directly from Scripture which are obscure if one is not familiar with the KJV.

“Before all worlds.” “Worlds” is an old rendering of the Greek αἰώνων and the Latin *saecula*, both of which are better rendered “ages” or even “time” in modern English. The phrases “from eternity” or “in eternity” would be equally acceptable.

“Very God of very God.” As we have said, when the Anglicans first published their Book of Common Prayer (1549), it was not based on the KJV, which wasn’t born until 1611, but on the earlier translation of Tyndale.¹² Tyndale referred to Christ in 1 John 5:20 as “very God,” as did The Great Bible, while all later translations, including the KJV, referred to Him as “true God.” Luther rendered it “der wahrhaftige Gott,” that is, “true God,” the same phrase he uses in the Second Article of the Creed: “I believe that Jesus Christ, true God...” I believe it would be very beneficial to connect this phrase from the Creed with the Scripture from which it is drawn and with the Small Catechism. Changing the “of” to “from” in all these phrases expressing the origin of the Son may also be preferable.

¹² This is also the origin of “forgive us our trespasses” in the Lord’s Prayer. Tyndale rendered “trespasses” in Matthew 6:12 what all subsequent translations, including The Great Bible and the KJV, rendered “debts.” The Book of Common Prayer therefore reads, “forgive us our trespasses.”

“The quick and the dead.” This is another credal phrase drawn directly from a KJV Scripture passage (actually, three passages—Acts 10:42, 2 Tim. 4:1, 1 Pet. 4:5). Since “quick” is an obsolete word for “living,” and since all PDE Bibles render this phrase, “the living and the dead,” I believe it wise to make the connection between the Creed and the Scriptures. Using PDE in our translation of the Creed would accomplish just that.

Addressing some potential counterarguments:

Contra: There are advantages to the KJV’s distinction between the second-person singular and plural pronouns.

Reply: Granted. And if we had been decision-makers in the evolution of our language, we may have retained the distinction. But that’s not how language works. No one sits down to design it. It evolves, and we learn it as it is actually used. Since the 2nd person singular/plural distinction has fallen entirely away from modern English, its use would be thoroughly artificial.

As it is, though I have taught my people repeatedly over the years that “thou/thee/thy” is singular and “ye/you” is plural in KJ English, there are few who remember it for long. So having an artificial distinction whose meaning is only recognized by some hardly seems worth it.

Besides, the context usually makes it clear enough whether the pronoun is singular or plural. And in those rare instances where it doesn’t make it clear and where it matters (e.g., Matt. 18:18), an explanation or footnote can be added. As for the Aaronic Benediction from Numbers 6, which is spoken to many “thee’s” at once, it seems to mean nothing different than if it were spoken to “you” (plural).

Contra: The early Anglican translations and the KJV Bible were used in the worship of early American Lutherans, and we are their successors, so we should use them, too.

Reply: First, anyone who is reading from a PDE Bible in church has already rejected the most important part of this argument. If we are justified in using a different Bible translation than they used, then we are justified in using a different translation of the liturgy than they used.

Second, those previous generations used worship language that was consistent with their Bible language. If we truly wish to follow in their footsteps, then we will bring our worship language in line with our Bible language.

Third, we are the successors of many generations of Christians of many nations, tribes, languages, and peoples. None of the texts we sing in the liturgy is original to English-speakers. We sing the same *Te Deum* (and Kyrie and Gloria and Sanctus, etc.) as hundreds of generations of Christians, even though we sing it in different languages and to different music. Using the same dialect that previous generations used in a given geographical area is not what establishes our connection to them. Indeed, it is the least significant bond that unites us. A common faith and a common doctrine are the most important thing.¹³ An expression of that common faith and doctrine in using similar source texts and patterns of

¹³ Which we do not, in fact, share with the Anglicans.

worship is both gratifying and edifying. But using the same language or dialect is unnecessary to achieve that expression of unity.

Contra: Lutheran churches in 16th century Germany continued using Latin in their worship, even though they used a German Bible translation. Therefore, we are justified in retaining the KJV language for the liturgy, even though we use modern English for our Bibles.

Reply: This is really an apples and oranges comparison. Latin had been the only worship language for the people of Germany until Luther introduced his Deutsche Messe. All educated people were instructed in Latin and were expected to become conversant in Latin, allowing a person to travel practically anywhere in the Holy Roman Empire and carry on an informal conversation, or engage in a formal debate, or participate in worship. So it is somewhat understandable that the city churches, where the educated people lived, retained Latin in much of the liturgy for a time.

I will not judge the wisdom of continuing to use Latin in their worship for a time in the city churches. I will note that they did not use Latin in the country churches, where those who were not conversant in Latin lived. There they used German only. We have no such division of linguistic abilities where we live. There are no schools where the children learn to speak KJ English. For that matter, no one anywhere speaks KJ English, and wherever there are some who understand it well, there will be others present who do not understand it very well at all.

Contra: People from the synods will ridicule us for modernizing our liturgical language.

Reply: First of all, the larger synods have all produced hymnals in which the liturgy, creeds, and prayers are provided in modern English.

Secondly, one of the things I've appreciated most about the diocese is that we do not live in the shadow of the larger synods from which we came. We do not live to please them. We do not crave their approval. We do not need to constantly justify our existence or our demonstrably Lutheran practices. While we recognize that we and our members may be attacked for all sorts of reasons, we rely on the truth of the Gospel as our defense and our comfort. It would be disappointing if we chose our worship language in order to appease those who already look down on us.

Contra: Many people love and have grown accustomed to the KJ English in TLH and would be disturbed if it were changed in the new hymnal.

Reply: I suspect this is true. Also true is that some have not been using TLH at all and would likely be disturbed if they are forced back into KJ English. Within a single congregation, there will likely be differing opinions about whatever is decided on the new hymnal. The arguments I provided above are intended to help us look past personal preference in order to see the objective benefit of using a language in worship that is consistent with the language of our Bibles and with the reality of the modern English which we and the people of our communities speak. We all know better than to craft our worship around the idol of personal preference.

But each pastor must evaluate the circumstances of his own flock and deal with it in love and with great patience. Those who are set on leaving the language of TLH unchanged

already have TLH, and their congregations could continue to use it as long as they find it prudent. Those who are ready to use the PDE English in their worship that they already hear and read in their Bibles can make the switch to a new PDE hymnal.

But understand, the changes required to bring our worship language into PDE can be very subtle—so subtle that a layman could continue to speak or sing the old words he or she is accustomed to even as the others speak or sing the new words.¹⁴

For all the reasons given above, I strongly believe we should be working toward bringing the language of our liturgy closer in line with the language of our PDE Bibles, the language of our members, and the language of our communities.

I hope to persuade my fellow pastors with these arguments. I am also committed to listening to opposing arguments with an open mind. But I would not force anything on anyone. I believe each pastor needs to weigh the advantages and disadvantages together with the people he serves. Whichever language is chosen for the diocesan hymnal, each pastor must be free to use the new hymnal with his people or to use something else, as he and they see fit, as long as the order they follow is in keeping with sound Lutheran practice. Our unity is not based on absolute conformity in worship practices or on the use of a single hymnal. We have been united around a common faith and confession thus far in the existence of the ELDoNA, and I am confident that this unity will not be jeopardized by minor variations in worship practices.

The Lord be with you, brothers.

Pastor Paul Rydecki
Emmanuel Lutheran Church
Las Cruces, New Mexico

¹⁴ For the sake of example, I have attached a sample of what a PDE service could look like, using the same melodies as are found in TLH.