

## Wording the Sanctus

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The Sanctus as a Case Study in Liturgical Language .....	1
The Biblical Sources of the Text .....	4
The Liturgical Function of the Text at Eucharist.....	9
Formal Correspondence .....	11
Dynamic Equivalence .....	12
Utilizing Tropes .....	14
One Way Forward.....	18

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### **The Sanctus as a Case Study in Liturgical Language**

Many Christian liturgical reformers concur that the language of Sunday public worship is best cast in the vernacular of the worshippers. Committees strive to craft what might be called a deep vernacular, one where accessible vocabulary and syntax are shaped to convey the numinous and to transform consciousness. Compounding the difficulty of this task is that many liturgical texts have multiple goals. At the least, liturgical texts carry biblical meaning, proclaim Christian kerygma, and perform several ritual functions. Especially when the texts under consideration are among the beloved classics of the tradition, the many competing priorities are difficult to reconcile.<sup>1</sup> This essay addresses the complex conundrum of liturgical translation by examining several suggested wordings of the Sanctus as recently proposed by church publishers and individuals. After outlining some of the contending preferences that are voiced in any translation process, this essay will examine the key wording from the biblical sources of the Sanctus and Benedictus qui venit and will consider three types of current proposals:

those aiming for formal correspondence, those advocating dynamic equivalence, and those relying on explanatory tropes.

The song of the assembly traditionally called the Sanctus, which usually includes also the Benedictus qui venit, constitutes one section of classic eucharistic praying. In some church traditions, the Song of the Angels, cited from Isaiah's vision recorded in Isaiah 6:3, and the Cry of the Crowd, recalling the gospels' narrative of the palm procession in Holy Week that quotes Psalm 118:26, are located within the great thanksgiving, after an introductory praise proper to the season and before the main text of the presider's eucharistic prayer. In other traditions, the text is sung at the conclusion of the great thanksgiving. Some church traditions regard this text, whether sung or spoken, as mandatory at every eucharistic celebration; other communities consider its use optional; still other Christians judge the text no longer valuable for continued use. The text can be found in eucharistic practice since the fourth century and probably echoes contemporaneous Jewish practice.<sup>2</sup>

In debating how to render any classic text are at least the following positions and competing values:

(1) Since the two parts of the text of the Sanctus derive from the Bible, the translation ought to reflect as closely as possible biblical Hebrew and Greek vocabulary. Thus, for the Sanctus, the word *Sabaoth*, its precise biblical meaning debated by Hebrew scholars, would be retained.

(2) Since one goal of Christian worship is to sing the Bible, the text ought to reflect the biblical translation best known by the worshippers. Thus, for many mainstream

Protestant churches, their translation being the NRSV, “the LORD of hosts” would be the rendering of *YHWH Sabaoth*.

(3) Since one goal of Sunday eucharist is to connect contemporary worshippers with Christians of the past, and in the case of the Sanctus to encourage continuing use of beloved musical settings, the current translation ought be as close as possible to the translation in the church’s memory. Thus, for example in the Sanctus, the text would always include the shout “Hosanna in the highest,” despite the fact that the biblical phrase is grammatically nonsensical. “Hosanna” cannot be “in” the highest.

(4) Because one goal of liturgical texts is the active participation of the faithful, obscure vocabulary is best avoided. Thus, for the Sanctus, it is advisable to translate the word “Hosanna,” since perhaps thanks to the word’s misuse in countless hymns, many faithful worshippers have no idea what the word means. (I checked.)

(5) Because one goal of Christian worship is to link together as many Christians as possible around the ecumenical world, the translation should not be idiosyncratic. Thus speakers of English should use the translation suggested by the English Language Liturgical Consultation and focus their creative energies on less universal texts.

(6) Since Christian theology claims that saving faith can indeed be expressed in contemporary categories of thought, the church must ask whether pre-scientific imagery is appropriate for standard usage. Thus it is debatable whether a poem such as the Sanctus that imagines angels flying around a throne room and a several-tiered universe is helpful for an assembly filled with 21st century post-enlightenment, northern-hemisphere believers.

(7) Since much of the liturgy relies on ancient and archetypal imagery, archaic categories are not a problem. Stop thinking, watch the sun “come up,” and join the song of the angels.

(8) Our culture prefers multiple options. Thus it is advisable to provide several alternative texts and to encourage intelligent choice from among the options.

(9) Liturgy is essentially ritual behavior. Utilizing many options works against ritual depth. Thus it is best for the committee to provide one Sanctus text and to urge mystatological study of its meaning.

We liturgists do well always to remember the story<sup>3</sup> of the town council that spent a million dollars to ramp the corners of the sidewalks, so as to assist persons in wheelchairs in crossing the street, only to discover that blind people, using their white canes, walked out into the traffic. Solving one problem will always create another. We can only hope that the problem we create will be less serious than the problem we are trying to solve. Perplexed by even this partial list of the positions and values that vie for our vote, we now attend to the complex vocabulary of the biblical sources of the Sanctus.

### **The Biblical Sources of the Text**

The Sanctus begins with the song of the angels as cited in the narrative of the call of Isaiah, Isaiah 6:1-13. The narrative states that while worshipping in the Jerusalem temple, Isaiah was transfixed by a vision of the divine throne room. As with any court scene, attendants surround the throne: in heaven, the attendants are angels, praising God. Their song begins with a triple cry of “holy.” In the Hebrew Scriptures, the adjective that English translates as “holy,” *qadosh*, denotes God’s total separateness, God’s mysterious

otherness. Holiness is the numinous power that Rudolph Otto regarded as the fundamental characteristic of what is religious. It is what separates the sacred from the profane. To define “holy” is to describe the sacred. In referring to God as “the Holy One,” Hebrew tradition and contemporary Judaism use the adjective as a circumlocution for the name of God. Despite much contemporary use of the word “holy,” at least in Christian parlance, the Hebrew category is not about moral rectitude, except in that what is divine is absolutely other than what is human. It is difficult for the numinosity of the divine to be conveyed in the 21st century by the small adjective “holy,” but most current translations continue to open the Sanctus with a triple “holy.”

The Holy One is *YHWH*. The tradition of biblical translation in English casts the tetragrammaton as LORD, and this term, without the specialized use of reduced capital letters, is characteristic in the church’s printing of the Sanctus text. Thus the Hebrew rendering of the mysterious first name of God has been reduced to a stereotypical title of a male authority figure. Perhaps by spelling the word “Lord” rather than “LORD,” Christian liturgical texts mean to translate the *Kyrios* of the Septuagint and the New Testament, seen for example in Revelation 4:8. To what degree our English noun “Lord” is the best term here is a matter of considerable current discussion.<sup>4</sup>

According to Isaiah 6:3, *YHWH* is of *Sabaoth*. The divine designation *YHWH Sabaoth* occurs over 250 times in the Hebrew Bible, and even Hebrew scholars debate the origin and meaning of this expression. Perhaps deriving from ancient polytheism in which the primary deity was attended by a court of lesser deities or was lauded as the creator and commander of the tribal armies, the noun in biblical tradition may mean something like “enthroned on the cherubim.” Especially during the intertestamental

period, Jewish mysticism enjoyed speculating on the placement of angels around and under the heavenly throne of God, stating that each of the four archangels, Gabriel, Michael, Raphael and Uriel, held up one of the four legs of God's throne.<sup>5</sup> Contemporary biblical scholars are not alone in wondering how to render this term: here in Isaiah 6:3 the translators of the Septuagint merely transliterated the Hebrew.

The Song of the Angels now praises God's glory. "Glory" is the English translation of *kabod*, that which God radiates. God's glory is God's honor, prestige, the manifestation of divinity. Hebrew narratives see in the fire on Sinai and in the cloud resting in the tabernacle evidence of "the glory" of God. During a theophany, the believer witnesses divine glory. Similar to the word "holy," a definition of "glory" becomes a synonym for the divine.

According to Isaiah 6:3, "the whole earth" (NRSV, REB, NIV) or "all the earth" (NAB) is full of God's glory. Since we expect God to be full of glory, we would have expected that "heaven," the place above and beyond the earth, the realm of the divine, is where God's glory is located. The angels' song surprises us with the line that God's glory fills the entire earth. If the adjective "holy" suggests God's transcendence, the statement about the whole earth affirms God's immanence. We recall the paradox laid out in the first chapters of Genesis: in Genesis 1, God is quite outside and beyond the created world, while the LORD of Genesis 2-3 takes a walk in the garden. Judaism and Christianity agree that both descriptions of God are true: God is both beyond and with.

Traditionally, when Christians have included the Song of the Angels into their eucharistic praying, they have accentuated the paradox of simultaneous transcendence and immanence by stating outright, "Heaven and earth are full of your glory." Perhaps

the phrase “heaven and earth” meant to include two of the earth’s three tiers – heaven and earth, but not the underworld of death – as the place of divine glory. This traditional emendation of the biblical quote indicates that the church has long believed itself authorized to alter the Bible when citing it for liturgical purposes. Whether the words “heaven and earth” convey the paradoxical locations of divine glory is yet another question for translators. Do contemporary worshippers think of “both all that is sacred and all that is profane” when they sing of “heaven and earth,” or do they think perhaps of the sky and the land?

A further emendation of the biblical verse is seen in that the Sanctus turns the third person into the second, rendering the passage as direct address to God. This technique has become increasingly useful for Christians as a method of avoiding masculine pronouns when quoting biblical references to God: “his” becomes “your.” The long tradition of emending the third person masculine of the biblical text to second person suggests that applying this solution when, for example, the Psalms are sung as liturgical texts ought not occasion any complaint.

Onto the Song of the Angels most Christians add the Cry of the Crowd. In granting these words to the Jerusalem crowd, the passion narratives quote Psalm 118:25-26. Psalm 118 is presented as a hymn spoken by and with the king after a military victory. The theme of the psalm is that God, not human strength or military prowess, secured the victory over the enemy. Thanks to God, Israel has “cut them off,” and although few translations make this clear, it is the foreskins of the enemy’s males that were cut off. Yet the struggles continue, for verse 25 asks once again for God to save the people. The Hebrew *Hosanna* is variously translated “Save us, we beseech you” (NRSV),

“we beg you, give victory” (Anchor Bible), “deliver us, we pray” (REB). Merely a transliteration of the Hebrew, the term “Hosanna” is an urgent plea for divine intervention in the face of perpetual threats. Verse 26, “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD,” refers to the king, who has led the victorious troops. The reference to branches (verse 27) suggests that this hymn of thanksgiving had become a standard text for the Feast of Tabernacles, an annual temple festival, both recalling past victories and pleading for continual safety.<sup>6</sup> John’s gospel (of course it would be John) reiterates the connection between Jesus’ approaching death and the people’s annual festival of salvation by stating that the Jerusalem crowd waved palm branches. Perhaps even the story of the transfiguration, with its reference to booths, in another way reflects the evangelists’ reliance on the imagery of Psalm 118 in interpreting the death of Jesus.

The passion narratives place the verses of Psalm 118 into the mouths of the crowd. The citation closest to the wording of the Psalm is in Mark 11. That the crowd shouts “Hosanna” and “Blessed is he” as Jesus enters Jerusalem indicates the political overtones, if not the absolute political intent, of the Jesus movement. Whether or not the Hosanna was understood as addressed to Jesus, surely the “he” who “comes in the name of the LORD” means to refer to Jesus. The parallel line that Mark provides, “Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David” (Mark 11:10) provides synonymous meaning. Jesus arrives in the city as the emissary of God; he comes in the power and with the authority of God.

Yet we cannot avoid the judgment that the gospel writers did not completely understand the Hebrew they were quoting. It makes no sense to say that “Hosanna” is “in” the highest. “The highest,” a term that derives from *Elyon*, a Canaanite divine title,

was a commonplace circumlocution for the divine dwelling place. “The highest” is the realm above all, perhaps literally above the clouds, surely symbolically beyond all, the reality that is God’s. Perhaps the writers meant that even in heaven, thus among the angels, is the cry “Hosanna,” although it is unclear why the angels would call out the petition “Save us.” Perhaps the angels are pleading for all the suffering people of the earth, praying with and for us for salvation.

### **The Liturgical Function of the Text at Eucharist**

A text has meaning within its context. Although the Sanctus is derived from a prophetic vision, a royal psalm and a first-century narrative, in its place within the eucharistic prayer it acquires a unique Christian liturgical meaning that is quite other than the sum of its parts. Like its constituent parts, however, it remains communal praise. The source texts record that the angels, the Israelite temple worshippers and the Jerusalem crowd are joining in prayer. Likewise, in the eucharist, all the people join in the Sanctus. That this song functions as praise in the mouths of all the people prods us toward an accessible translation of an admittedly difficult text. As well, since many contemporary worshippers do not recognize the presider’s prayer as their own – note the number of churches in which the entire assembly reads aloud the prayer of the day – it is especially important that the Sanctus be communally sung, in order to give the whole congregation the sense of active participation in the eucharistic prayer. Not only does the Sanctus join together the assembly and the presider in the great thanksgiving: the introduction to the Sanctus states that the song unites the worshippers with the angels in heaven, and the fact that the Sanctus has been a standard eucharistic text for centuries connects the current

assembly with millions of assemblies throughout Christian practice. In its liturgical context, the text changes from biblical proclamation that we hear to communal praise that we render. The biblical citations have become performative utterance.<sup>7</sup>

When we sing this praise as the bread and wine are on the table, all the biblical situations are transformed by the Christian liturgical occasion. We have not before us Isaiah in the temple, but ourselves in our parish churches; not prophetic ecstasy, but a regular Sunday morning ritual; not a vision of the divine throne, but a perhaps simple wooden table; not the angelic choir, but our own perhaps meager assembly; not praise in a pre-scientific several-tiered universe, but praise in a cosmos filled with galaxies beyond our knowing; not an annual Israelite festival, but a weekly Christian meal; not an ancient celebration of a victorious tribal monarch, but our honoring of Christ, who was not a victorious tribal monarch; not Jesus entering the city as messiah, but bread and wine entering our bodies as God. Nothing is as it was. All is transformed in the eucharistic praise around the bread and wine. The bread we baked yesterday is God among us, and gazing at the bread, we beg for the continuing salvation of God.

The Sanctus can be seen as supreme metaphor. Metaphor calls something what it is not, and thus makes it so. Metaphor uses words other than labels, and by so doing helps us to recognize more than what was. Such metaphoric song exemplifies the Thomistic suggestion that although the accidents remain the same, the substance has changed. We think we see only our church's furniture, some bread and wine, the presider and the assistants: by faith we realize the throne of God, Christ victorious over his death, angels and all the faithful of times past and present. Here is the task: to craft the text and to

compose music that can suggest the magnificent multi-layering of meaning we want the Sanctus to convey.

### **Formal Correspondence**

In current use among English-speaking Christians, the ecumenically accessible text that most closely follows the pattern of translation as formal correspondence is that presented by the English Language Liturgical Consultation.<sup>8</sup> Formal correspondence attempts to translate as closely as possible the words and syntax of the original. Formal correspondence hopes to leave matters of meaning and interpretation to the user, not to the translator. Many churches use this version of the Sanctus, not because they have judged it unsurpassed, but because they have made a commitment to use ecumenical translations of common texts. The ELLC text is familiar to most readers of this journal, but after a detailed consideration of the biblical sources and liturgical function of the Sanctus, it is interesting to consider once again:

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,  
heaven and earth are full of your glory.

Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest.

*YHWH* is rendered in its characteristic liturgical way, “Lord,” without recourse to the four capital letters. “Heaven and earth” renders the Sanctus as it has long appeared in Christian eucharistic practice. The biblical “in the highest” is formally translated.

In the rendering that is furthest from the Hebrew, the plural noun *Sabaoth* is suggested by two nouns, “power and might.” This replacement of an obscure image with abstract descriptors recalls the usual technique in rendering *El Shaddai* as “almighty God,” where a noun, *shaddai*, that has something to do with peaks, whether mountain or breast, has been replaced with an adjective. Have we gained more by accessibility than we have lost in rejecting the original image? Whether it is tribal armies or astral beings that attest to the greatness of the deity, the earlier English translation of “hosts” maintained the ambivalence. By presenting the phrase “power and might,” the English Language Liturgical Consultation offers us a Song of the Angels from which the angels are perhaps missing. At best, they are hiding “in the highest.”

### **Dynamic Equivalence**

Several church publishing houses have presented renderings of the Sanctus that embody the value of dynamic equivalence. The attempt of these versions is to capture the force of the original image and rhetoric and to present an equivalent expression in the vernacular. Here are some examples: In one of several Sanctus texts printed by the United Church of Canada, the biblical *YHWH Sabaoth* is rendered “God of love and majesty.”<sup>9</sup> “Majesty” reflects some of the biblical vision of Isaiah, “love” perhaps a quality more appealing to contemporary worshippers. The Anglicans in New Zealand offer “God of mercy, giver of life.”<sup>10</sup> This phrase suggests both the mercy of God’s mighty protection and the life that comes from God alone. A similar suggestion is seen in the phrase “God, power of life and love.”<sup>11</sup> Here again the mysterious life of either the angelic or tribal armies has been rendered with the noun “life,” with the contemporary

addition of “love,” thus providing a version of the original hymn more immediately accessible to the contemporary assembly. Perhaps “life” and “love” are seen as two categories within which to understand divine activity.

The “heaven and earth” found in many versions of the Sanctus is, in A New Zealand Prayer Book, “earth and sea and sky and all that lives.” The phrase does well to capture the totality of the created order that surprisingly contains God’s glory. However, the phrase omits reference to the sacred realm as the natural place of God’s glory. Another version offers the phrase “the whole universe.”<sup>12</sup>

Several translations replace the “he” in the Benedictus qui venit with “the one.” While eliminating the masculine, the replacement may obscure the meaning that “the one” is not any one, but is Christ, now on the table in bread and wine. Following its own guidelines for rendering the biblical *YHWH*, the United Church of Christ replaces “the Lord” with “our God.”<sup>13</sup> In another version, this phrase reads “Blessed is Christ who comes in your name, O God,”<sup>14</sup> thus proposing solutions to the masculine sense of both “he” and “LORD.”

Nearly all versions retain use of the word “Hosanna.” One option in the service book of the United Church of Canada offers instead the line “Save us, we pray.”<sup>15</sup> Perhaps due to the relative obscurity of the term “Hosanna,” it may be that some such dynamic equivalence is called for. Many people think the word is a synonym for “praise,” and so any sense of our pleading for salvation as we stand before the bread and wine is lost. At eucharist, we not only praise God for the indwelling that comes in our communion, but we also beg God for the coming of Christ’s dominion of peace and

justice. The idea behind “Hosanna” does this: does our continuing use of the term accomplish its task?

“In the highest” is a particularly interesting usage. Although we know there is no “up” in the universe, no “highest,” we continue to speak as if there is. Thus liturgical text committees might judge that “in the highest” is as meaningful as “the sun is coming up,” that is, perfectly understandable speech. (Most versions disregard the grammatical conundrum of “hosanna” being “in” the highest.) Yet the service book of the United Church of Canada offers several options. “Through the ages”<sup>16</sup> replaces the spatial image with a temporal one, perhaps inspired by the fact that *olam* in Hebrew can refer to either the reaches of space or time. A second Sanctus version offers “beyond all.”<sup>17</sup> Here it is hoped that the abstract prepositional phrase will replace the archaic idea of the sky above us as the boundary of the human world.

### **Utilizing Tropes**

A third technique that Christians have used over the centuries is to add glosses to the biblical text. Glosses explain the biblical language, suggest multiple meanings, and by lengthening the time it takes to sing the text, allow for further contemplation. It seems that first it was musicians in the ninth century who used this technique, undoubtedly for musical, rather than linguistic, reasons.<sup>18</sup> Continuing this tradition, Per Harling, a church musician in Sweden, has offered an interesting rendition of the Sanctus that is used by some Swedish Lutheran churches. His English translation is as follows:<sup>19</sup>

You are holy, you are whole.

You are always ever more than we ever understand.

You are always at hand.

Blessed are you coming near.

Blessed are you coming here to your church in wine and bread,  
raised from soil, raised from dead.

You are holy.

You are wholeness, you are present.

Let the cosmos praise you, Lord.

Sing hosanna in the highest,

Sing hosanna to our God.

The author has amplified the single word “holy” with the terms “whole” and “wholeness,” thus alerting worshippers to the linguistic connection between these ideas. We too seldom recognize “holy” and “whole” as merely two different spellings of the single idea of a unity that is unique, centered, intact, healthy. Such a gloss on “holy” widens its meaning from a more limited understanding of God’s quality as being merely sinlessness. *Sabaoth* is replaced with the phrase “more than we ever understand,” a wording that might bring a smile to the face of Hebrew scholars. That this God who is beyond our knowing is also “coming near, coming here” carries the idea of “heaven and earth” into the eucharistic assembly itself by making explicit that the divine throne of Isaiah’s vision is now the wine and bread on our table. The archaic cosmology of the biblical Song of the Angels is both repeated in the phrase “in the highest,” and also transferred into classic Christian terms: the God we praise is the Christ who was raised, not above the firmament, but from soil and death. [Perhaps a clearer English translation would read “from death,” rather than “from dead.”] The noun “cosmos” presents a

contemporary gloss on “heaven and earth.” One version made available by the author retains without any gloss the transliteration “hosanna”; another version replaces this term with “Hallelujah.” Harling’s version addresses many of the translation and interpretation issues that this essay has discussed. Especially the glosses on “holy” and the eucharistic focus of the Song of the Angels and the Cry of the Crowd call for our attention.

The hymnal of the United Church of Canada reprints a musical rendition of the Sanctus composed for congregational singing in the “Misa Popular Salvadorená.”<sup>20</sup>

Holy, holy, holy,  
 holy, holy, holy is our God,  
 God of earth and God of heaven.  
 Holy, holy is our God.

Holy, holy, holy,  
 holy, holy, holy is our God,  
 God of all, and God of history.  
 Holy, holy is our God.

Who accompanies our people,  
 who lives within our struggles,  
 of all the earth and heaven the one and only God.  
 Blessed those who in our God’s name announce the holy Gospel,  
 proclaiming forth the good news:  
 our liberation comes.

“Holy” is sung, not three, but sixteen times, giving the worshipper space to widen and lengthen its meaning. The entirety of God’s majesty is indicated by terms of both space – earth and heaven – and time – “God of history.” The glory of God, that is, God’s godness, is praised as being primarily within the human struggles of those who are poor. Thus not the eucharistic table, but the wider eucharistic community is recognized as the throne of God. The gloss on the Benedictus qui venit emphasizes that in our current situation, it is Christians who bear the redeeming word to the world. This rendition is most interesting in that it translates, rather than transliterates, the term “hosanna.” By stating the good news as “our liberation comes,” this Benedictus qui venit captures a far more biblical meaning of the Cry of the Crowd in the gospel narratives than do most other Sanctus versions. Just as the Jerusalem crowd begged God to save them, so does the community singing this Sanctus.

It is evident that the addition of glosses provides extended interpretation, and we may find ourselves either appreciating or criticizing the way that particular glosses elaborate on the liturgical meaning of the Sanctus. For example, in a rendition published recently by Augsburg Fortress, “hosanna” has been amplified into “Hail, hosanna, Lord of light!”<sup>21</sup> The “hail” is helpful in explaining “hosanna.” Yet “Lord of light” seems to refer back to the Sanctus and away from any biblical reference to the passion narrative. Glosses also add textual density. Some liturgists judge that it is better to keep the liturgical text biblically sparse, and to trust to the assembly and its educators continual study of its meanings. Other liturgists doubt that such mystagogy occurs with any regularity, and thus they suggest that the text itself had better include more handles to

grab on to. But complicating these decisions is that of all the possible handles, we tend to prefer that only our favorite ones be attached.

### **One Way Forward**

This study suggests that there is no self-evidently perfect, or even best, way to render the Sanctus in contemporary eucharistic song. My years of analyzing the rhetoric and theology of liturgical texts have not brought me to a time of easy decision-making, since the more I know, the less I know; that is, the more linguistic, biblical and theological knowledge I have, the more complicated are the factors that must be considered.<sup>22</sup> I can only urge communal collaboration: each individual author with others, each publishing committee with others, each denomination with others, each decade with past decades.

For comfort we might reflect on the “Abba, Father” citations in the New Testament. Paul, writing Greek to Greek speakers, cites the Aramaic word “Abba” (Romans 8:15, Galatians 4:6), held sacred by the early Christians because Jesus was said to have used it. Yet the gospels cite the Aramaic only once (Mark 14:36), when Jesus was praying without any witnesses in the Garden of Gethsemane,<sup>23</sup> and biblical scholars continue a lively debate about the precise translation of Abba or its contemporaneous usage. Christian liturgical translation, it appears, has never been easy.

Yet this study has led me to propose the following way forward.<sup>24</sup>

(1) Because I have high regard for ecumenical consensus of shared texts, I hope that church worship offices and ecclesiastical publishing houses will continue to urge use of the ecumenically approved text of the Sanctus. This conviction is complicated by the

fact that I do not find the 1988 ELLC translation the best possible English version. I am especially disappointed by the demythologizing phrase “power and might.” Thus I hope that within my lifetime an even better English translation will be proposed.

(2) Because I have high regard for accessible liturgical English, I suggest that liturgical books provide at least one alternate text. Glosses would amplify all or most of the complex vocabulary that this essay has addressed. For example, “hosanna” might be rendered “Save us, we pray!”

(3) Because I am a feminist, I would avoid double use of the word “Lord.”

(4) Because I am a Lutheran, I would make the Christology of the Benedictus qui venit more explicit.

(5) Although I am far from a biblical literalist, I would somehow get the angels back into their song.

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<sup>1</sup> Recent examples of the search for appropriate wording of classic liturgical texts are Paul Minear, “But Whose Prayer Is It?” Worship 76 (2002) 324-338, and Gail Ramshaw, “In the Name: Towards Alternative Baptismal Idioms,” The Ecumenical Review 54 (2002) 343-352.

<sup>2</sup> A thorough discussion of the Sanctus is Bryan D. Spinks, The Sanctus in the Eucharistic Prayer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

<sup>3</sup> I always credit James F. White for this crucial liturgists’ parable.

<sup>4</sup> For a discussion of the tetragrammaton and its translation, see Gail Ramshaw, God beyond Gender (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 47-58.

<sup>5</sup> See Gail Ramshaw, Words Around the Table (Chicago: LTP, 1991) 80-85 for further meditation on this biblical phrase.

<sup>6</sup> When in 1558 the English Princess Elizabeth was informed of the death of Queen Mary, she is recorded to have exclaimed verse 23 of Psalm 118: “This is the LORD’s doing: it is marvelous in our eyes.” See Anne Somerset, Elizabeth I (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991) 57. No biography that I have encountered comments on the fact that Psalm 118:23 follows upon verse 22, “The stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone.” It appears that Elizabeth knew her psalms.

<sup>7</sup> A. C. Thiselton, Language, Liturgy and Meaning (Bramcote, Notts.: Grove Books, 1975), 18.

<sup>8</sup> English Language Liturgical Consultation, Praying Together (Nashville: Abingdon, 1988), 35-36.

<sup>9</sup> The New Century Hymnal (Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 1995), 17.

<sup>10</sup> A New Zealand Prayer Book (Auckland: Collins, 1988), 469.

<sup>11</sup> Celebrate God’s Presence: A Book of Services for The United Church of Canada (Etobicoke, Ontario: The United Church of Canada, 2000), 252.

<sup>12</sup> The New Century Hymnal, 17.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ruth C. Duck and Patricia Wilson-Kastner, Praising God: The Trinity in Christian Worship (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999), 154.

<sup>15</sup> Celebrate God’s Presence, 256.

<sup>16</sup> Celebrate God’s Presence, 252.

<sup>17</sup> Celebrate God’s Presence, 256.

<sup>18</sup> Spinks, 145.

<sup>19</sup> Per Harling, ed., Worshipping Ecumenically (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1995) 112-114, or Per.harling@mailbox.swipnet.se.

<sup>20</sup> Guillermo Joaquin Cuellar, translated by Linda McCrae, Voices United, #944.

<sup>21</sup> Martin Seltz, “Holy, Holy, Lord Most Holy,” Renewing Worship I, Congregational Song, 38.

<sup>22</sup> Recall the quip: “In the beginner’s mind there are many possibilities; in the expert’s mind there are few.”

<sup>23</sup> Thanks to Raymond E. Brown, S.S., for pointing this out to his New Testament students.

<sup>24</sup> Although several years ago I crafted a version of the Sanctus (see Celebrate God’s Presence, 256), I would now amend that text.