Those who translated the current Latin liturgy into English in 1985 generally used the method that has been called dynamic equivalence in an effort to make the meaning of the original text as clear as possible to a wide congregation with a minimal use of technical words. By way of contrast, the new translation uses the method of formal equivalence and is concerned to reproduce the original Latin text as precisely as possible in the new language. To some extent it is a critique of the current English text as being inexact and as losing many of the allusions to biblical and ecclesiastical tradition. The new prayer at Holy Communion, “Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed,” alludes to Matthew 8:5-13, the story of the centurion at Capernaum. Even the expression “my soul shall be healed” is a parallel to “my servant shall be healed” of Matthew 8:8. That allusion is considerably diminished by the current form of that prayer, “Lord, I am not worthy to receive you, but only say the word and I shall be healed.” As for inaccuracy, one could argue that the current English text of the Confiteor, “I confess... that I have sinned through my own fault,” loses some of the power of the original, which is given more literally in the new translation as “I confess... that I have greatly sinned... through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault.” The latter expression is more elevated and repeats the Latin phraseology exactly.

Need for Explanation

The current dynamically equivalent translation attempted to provide an explanation within the text itself for certain unusual words or concepts of the original Latin. For example, at the Sanctus, the expression Dominus Deus Sabaoth is given as, “Lord, God of power and might,” while the new translation says, “Lord God of hosts.”

One might argue that “hosts” is a more accurate translation of the ancient Hebrew word Sabaoth, but that presupposes that the congregation understands “hosts” as referring to an army of angels or members of the heavenly court led into battle against the forces of evil by Yhwh himself. The “army” or “host” of heaven actually refers to pagan astral deities in 2 Kings 17:16 but to Yhwh’s own heavenly court in 1 Kings 22:19. The prophets used the term “Lord of hosts” 247 out of about 285 times, not only to express

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God’s power and majesty, but also in a context of righteousness and God’s inexorable ability to punish sinners like those of Sodom (Isa 1:9) or to redeem the Israelite captives from exile in Babylon (Isa 44:6). The new translation, “Lord God of hosts,” alludes directly to these texts. In itself it is open to a richer understanding of the Latin than is the current translation, but it needs to be supplemented by an explanation of the images employed.

**Pax hominibus bonae voluntatis**

Every Christmas we read the story of the angels appearing to the shepherds and, according to Luke 2:14, singing a hymn in praise of God’s glory and gift of peace to human beings, but for centuries there has been a bitter debate between Protestants and Catholics about its correct translation. Is it “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men” (King James), or is it “Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth to men of good will” (Douay-Rheims)? The current text of the Gloria reads, “Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth,” more in line with the King James Bible, while the new translation says, “Glory to God in the highest, and peace to people of good will,” closer to the Douay-Rheims. Is the focus of the text on God’s “good will” to human beings, or is it on the internal state of the humans who receive God’s peace, namely those of “good will”? There are actually a number of issues involved here. Some Greek manuscripts of Luke 2:14, generally considered to be the better ones, read *doxa en hypsistois theo, kai epi gei eirene en anthropois eudokias*, which is literally translated as “glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to human beings of good will,” though that leaves undefined whether the genitive, “of good will,” is objective or subjective: is it God’s gracious will granting the gift of peace, or is it the subjective state of those receiving it? Other Greek manuscripts, however, change the final genitive *eudokias* “of good will” to a nominative form, *eudokia*, which simply means “good will (toward others).” Many of those manuscripts are later, and it is very probable that the King James Bible translators read that form in their Greek text. The official Kurt Aland edition of the Greek text in use today reads the genitive, *eudokias*, but gives it the grade of B, which is defined as containing “some degree of doubt.” This underlies the Vulgate translation, *Gloria in excelsis Deo, et in terra pax hominibus bonae voluntatis*, but does not yet warrant a reading of the genitive as a subjective one. A similar expression has been found in the Hebrew text of several hymns at Qumran: “the sons of his (God’s) good pleasure” (1QH iv.32f; xi.9), and “the elect of his (God’s) good pleasure” (1QH viii.6). All this justifies the NAB translation of Luke 2:14, “Glory to God in high heaven, peace on earth to those on whom his favor rests,” reading *eudokias* as an objective genitive. The current English text of the Gloria, “and peace to his people on earth” points in the same direction, while the new translation, “and on earth peace to people of good will” reads the word *eudokias* (Latin *bonae voluntatis*) as a subjective genitive. It seems we are returning to the Douay-Rheims! For a proper understanding of this reading, there is need of an explanation.

**Pro multis**

The current words of institution narrative over the chalice of wine read in part, “It will be shed for you and for all so that sins may be forgiven.” The new translation reads instead, “which will be poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.” Both are said to be translations of the same Latin words, *qui pro vobis et pro multis effundetur in remissionem peccatorum*. The new translation is the more literal, which raises the question as to the reasons behind
the current reading of *pro multis* (literally “for many”) as “for all.” Does “many” in this context mean “all”? A short answer is Yes. Matthew 26:28 reads, “For this is my blood, the blood of the covenant, to be poured out in behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins” (NAB translation), similar to Mark 14:24, “This is my blood, the blood of the covenant, to be poured out on behalf of many” (NAB). Is there a limitation of the salvation wrought by the blood of Jesus, available to “many” but not to all? And if not, if the salvific blood of Jesus on the Cross is “for all,” not just for many, then why do the words of institution according to Matthew and Mark say “for many”? It is generally conceded by exegetes that Matthew and Mark present Jesus at the Last Supper as referring to the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53, which ends with the words, “He shall take away the sins of many (Heb. *rab-bîm*), and win pardon for their offences” (53:12, NAB). Yet earlier in Isaiah 53:6 the text says, “We had all (Heb. *kullanu*, from *kol*) gone astray like sheep, each following his own way; But the Lord laid upon him the guilt of us all (*kullanu*)” (NAB). In this context, as elsewhere, the Hebrew word *rab-bîm*, ordinarily translated as “many,” really means “each and every one” of a whole group, which we would translate as “all” the members of that group. The Hebrew word *kol*, ordinarily translated as “all,” really means a totality. Both words can be translated as “all,” but from a different perspective, either as individual members, or as a whole. Indications of this usage can be found in Isaiah 2:2f, where “all nations” is parallel to “many peoples” streaming to the Lord’s house; see also Nehemiah 13:26, and the parallels between “all” and “many” in Romans 5:15-19. The blood of Christ in Matthew 26:28 and Mark 14:24 was poured out for the salvation of all. The new translation, by remaining literal, will have to explain its meaning.

**Receiving the New Texts**

Both forms of translation, dynamic and formal equivalence, have their advantages and disadvantages. The new formally equivalent translation preserves allusions to the Bible and to Christian tradition in a richer way than does the current text and uses more elevated language. But it will need a lot of explanation for our contemporary congregations to comprehend its intentions and to delight in its fullness.