AN EASTERN HERITAGE IN A WESTERN RITE: A STUDY OF SOURCE AND METHOD FOR ARCHBISHOP CRANMER'S INCLUSION OF 'A PRAYER OF CHRYSOSTOME' IN THE ENGLISH LITANY OF 1544[*]

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Abstract

Representing the first officially authorized printing of an English-language text, Thomas Cranmer's *Litany* (1544)—a direct precursor of the 1549 *Book of Common Prayer*—is an important historical document. It also has linguistic significance, since 'in setting forth certain godly prayers and suffrages in our native English tongue', Cranmer went beyond simple translation of the Latin. Among his innovations was the insertion of 'A Prayer of Chrysostome', taken directly from an Eastern Orthodox source. The English rendering of the prayer has long been considered a masterly translation. However, while beautifully executed, Cranmer's version (compared with earlier Greek and Latin texts) is peculiar at points and raises theological questions. This study reviews and critiques scholarship on the matter while offering new insights into Cranmer's connections to Christian Orthodox thought and practice.

1.1. Introduction and Background

It has been suggested that the ostensible incorporation of liturgical elements from an Eastern Christian corpus of material into the nascent Anglican Rite is attributable largely if not solely to the early interest Archbishop Thomas

Cranmer (1489–1556) exhibited in these texts. While the overall scope of the suspected borrowings remains disputed, there exists no controversy regarding the origins of a short prayer upon which Cranmer bestowed the title 'A Prayer of Chrysostome'. Representing the most obvious Greek element in the Anglican tradition, this prayer is central to an evaluation of the impact Cranmer's contact with Byzantine thought produced. Through it we may trace something tangible of the scholarship, method, and vision he employed in compiling a revised rite of worship. To do so requires considering Cranmer's motivation and the potential source(s) from which he undertook the translation, as well as the factors that influenced his somewhat curious rendering.

The prayer first appeared in the English Litany of 1544, which Cranmer composed so that in the midst of 'cruel wars, hatreds, and dissentions' there might be 'set forth certain godly prayers and suffrages in our native English tongue'.[1] Given the contemporary state of affairs in England, the litany was an obvious locus for reform. Richard Dixon once wryly commented that 'it was never merry in England since the [Roman] Litany was ordained, and Sancta Maria, Sancta Katerina, sung'.[2] In truth, however, the Latin prayers, with their long lists of petitions to obscure saints, had become spiritually inaccessible as well as being unintelligible to the vast majority of the population.

Although it is doubtful that Henry VIII anticipated radical revisions when he agreed to decree an English-language litany, Cranmer was nonetheless tacitly accorded the discretion and latitude needed to go beyond merely translating existing texts. The archbishop, reform-minded and long desirous of incorporating the vernacular into worship, seized this opportunity. As a result, while the Litany of 1544 still bore a resemblance to its immediate predecessor, it also contained a significant amount of new material, of which 'A Prayer of Chrysostome' was but a part.[3] Constituting a direct precursor to the 1549 *Book of Common Prayer*, it foreshadowed what was to come.

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1.   John Edmund Cox (ed.), *Miscellaneous Writings and Letters of Thomas Cranmer* (Cambridge: Parker Society, 1846), p. 494.

2.   Richard W. Dixon, *History of the Church of England From the Abolition of the Roman Jurisdiction* (London: Routledge, 1895), p. 406.

3.   The service was first published in late May of 1544 in a slim volume entitled *An Exhortation unto Prayer…* (STC 10620), available through Early English Books Online (EEBO). A number of additional editions and redactions soon followed; see F.E. Brightman, *The English Rite: Being a Synopsis of the Sources and Revisions of the Book of Common Prayer*, I (London: Rivington's, 2nd edn, 1921), pp. lx-lxi. Determining from where these new elements were derived is challenging, however. Aside from the prayer being examined, which is unquestionably Byzantine in origin, there are indications that the *Liturgy of St John Chrysostom* may have also influenced the wording of the intercessory petitions in the Litany,

But why did he choose to include an ancient *eastern* prayer? To answer the question substantively, one must address the scholarly character of Thomas Cranmer. The archbishop has in the past been unflatteringly depicted by some as equivocating between Catholic, Lutheran and eventually even Zwinglian positions almost to the point of haphazardness. Yet while Cranmer was obviously not a finished product theologically when he met up with history, to simply dismiss him as habitually wavering and indecisive is unwarranted, particularly as such an interpretation ignores the extensive study he made of patristic and liturgical works. Nor does it take into account Cranmer's capacity for synthesis, which is most genuinely where his intellectual strengths lay.[4] The incorporation of material from various and diverse sources, coupled with an ability to combine it engagingly in the English language, enabled him to ultimately compile a litany, which, while indebted to many, was singularly his own.

Relative to his time, Cranmer was thus at once both an innovator and a conservative. These two at first seemingly paradoxical proclivities represent characteristic and defining tendencies in his work, and are particularly well-articulated through the prayer under consideration. A churchman such as Cranmer, who sought no definitive break with tradition but desired a degree of freedom from formulaic constraints, would have found the Prayer of St Chrysostom historically interesting and liturgically quite useful. It is important to recollect that the English Reformation appealed, in its most idealistic sense, 'to that which was Catholic as opposed to Roman, and to the early Fathers as opposed to medieval scholasticism' as the basis for the rejuvenation of the

certain of which appear to possess a distinctly Greek character; see John Dowden, *The Workmanship of the Prayerbook in Its Literary and Liturgical Aspects* (London: Methuen, 1899), pp. 148-49. Some of these petitions, however, also have parallels in Luther's Latin Litany, a point Dowden neglects to address. I am indebted to Dr Robin Leaver for bringing the above to my attention and for providing the relevant citations. Diarmaid MacCulloch, for his part, contends that 'much of the original work of synthesis had in fact been done not by Cranmer, but nine years earlier by the evangelical publisher William Marshall, in his adroitly Lutheran-oriented *Goodly Primer* of 1535'; see *Thomas Cranmer: A Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), p. 328. Marshall's Litany, however, does not contain the 'Prayer of Chrysostome', and while in places it bears a marked resemblance to Cranmer's subsequent composition, the two are not nearly as identical as MacCulloch intimates (STC 15988, EEBO). Further complicating matters, Marshall appears to have borrowed rather freely from Luther; see Brightman, *English Rite*, I, p. lii; Charles C. Butterworth, *The English Primers (1529–1545): Their Publication and Connection with the English Bible and the Reformation in England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1953), Appendix I [A].

4.   MacCulloch describes the Litany as being 'like all of Cranmer's compositions…an ingenious effort of scissors and paste out of previous texts'; see *Thomas Cranmer*, p. 328.

Church.[5] It did not, however, simply seek a return to the ways of primitive Christianity. Regaining an authentic Christianity for Cranmer, therefore, entailed a synthesis of what he judged as scripturally sound material, both ancient and more recent, into a context wherein it became meaningful in a contemporary sense. Brought together in such a manner, the elements could still speak through their own legitimacy, but in a new way relative to each other and the community of believers.

Moreover, by including the Prayer of St Chrysostom in the Litany, Cranmer implicitly recognized that recourse to Christian authority existed outside of the sphere of Rome and that this authority could be claimed by the reforming English Church and defined accordingly. A very significant theological assertion thus emerged: the papacy was not the sole guardian of, nor claimant to, the fullness of the patristic heritage. It is not difficult to imagine that in composing the 1544 Litany Cranmer may have felt he was reviving something of the ancient rites which existed in Britain prior to the mission of Augustine in 597, who brought with him the Roman Canon of the Mass. Indeed, this may well have been the reason the prayer was placed at the conclusion of the service, where it would serve as a final and conspicuous reminder to congregants that the litany was intended specifically for them.

Similarly, the fact that Eastern Orthodox liturgical services were historically conducted in the vernacular (or proto-vernacular in the case of the Slavic Churches) would have surely appealed to Cranmer. Christianity as expressed in Byzantium was also intimately tied to the politics of empire, raising a host of associations potentially useful to a man dependent on staying within the good graces of a capricious monarch. But there also seems to have been another, and more compelling, motivation for choosing this particular prayer: reading Cranmer leads one to the inescapable conclusion that he held John Chrysostom in especially high regard among the Church Fathers.[6] Illustrative of this is his recourse to Chrysostom's authority alone when discussing the propriety of utilizing the vernacular in worship:

> [L]et us here discusse what it availeth Scripture to be had and read of the lay and vulgare people. And to this question I intend here to say nothing, but that was spoken and written by the noble doctour and most morall divine, Saint John Chrysostome.[7]

5.   Stephen J. Hurlbut (ed.), *The Liturgy of the Church of England Before and After the Reformation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1941), p. 2.

6.   MacCulloch refers to Chrysostom as Cranmer's 'perennial favourite' among the Patristic writers; see *Thomas Cranmer*, p. 467.

7.   Thomas Cranmer, *The Judgement of Archbishop Cranmer Concerning the People's Right to, and Discreet Use of, the H. Scriptures* (London: John Taylor, 1689), p. 3.

1.2. Cranmer's Source(s) for the
Translation of 'A Prayer of Chrysostome'

In the Orthodox service, this prayer is recited at the beginning of the Liturgy of the Catechumens (during what is sometimes called the Deacon's Litany) by the celebrant, the first part silently, the doxology aloud while the choir intones the third antiphon. Cranmer's rendition omits the doxology entirely, while his translation and subsequent positioning of the prayer gives it a decidedly different feel and emphasis.[8] Below is Cranmer's wording:

> Almighty God, which hast given us grace at this time with one accord to make our common supplications unto thee, and dost promise, that when two or three be gathered in thy name, thou wilt grant their requests: fulfill now, O Lord, the desires and petitions of thy servants, as may be most expedient for them, granting us in this world knowledge of thy truth, and in the world to come, life everlasting. Amen.[9]

The Greek, however, reads as follows:

> Ho tas koinas tautas kai, sumphōnous hēmin charisamenos proseuchas, ho kai duo kai trisi sumphōnousin epi tō onomati sou, tas aitēseis parechein epaggeilamenos, autos, kai nun tōn doulōn sou ta aitēmata pros to sumpheron plērōson. chōrēgōn hēmin en tō paronti aiōni tēn epignōsin tēs sēs alētheias, kai en tō mellonti zōēn aiōnion charizomentos.[10]

The disparities in the above two texts raise intriguing questions concerning the source(s) Cranmer used to make his translation and how this may have influenced the rendering of the prayer into English. Several possibilities have been advanced. We know that Cranmer's library at some point in time contained the 1539 Basel edition of Chrysostom's *Opera*, which includes Erasmus' translation of the *Liturgy of St John Chrysostom* into Latin.[11] More recently, David Selwyn has demonstrated that Cranmer also possessed Wechel's 1537 Paris edition of *Missa graecolatina*, wherein Erasmus' translation is bound alongside

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8.   In his introduction to *The English Rite* (I, p. lxviii), Brightman suggests Cranmer's translation lacked the doxology because Cranmer had misunderstood the textual ordering of the original Greek, where the conclusion of the prayer would have appeared at the end of the litany.

9.   Quoted, with modernized spelling, in Brian Taylor, 'The Prayer of St. Chrysostom: A Liturgical Note', *Anglican Theological Review* 40.1 (1958), p. 23.

10.   As it appears in Taylor, 'Prayer of St. Chrysostom: A Liturgical Note', p. 22. Taylor took the text of the prayer from a 1958 edition of the *Liturgy of Chrysostom* printed in Benice.

11.   Cranmer's copy resides at Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge.

the original Greek.[12] Aside from typographical variances in the use of ligatures and diacriticals, the Latin translation of the prayer in the above two works is identical. Another potential candidate is the entirely Greek language volume of Chrysostom's liturgy, bound together with those of Basil the Great and the Presanctified Gifts, published in Rome in 1526.[13] John Dowden and F.E. Brightman, however, both maintain that Cranmer's primary source was the 1528 Venetian edition of *D. Liturgia S. Joannis Chrysostomi*, wherein a Latin translation is printed alongside the Greek text.[14] Subsequently, E.C. Ratcliff has proposed an entirely different source for the translation: Beatus Rhenanus's 1540 Colmar edition of *Missa D. Ioannis Chrysostomi secundum veterem usum ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae,*[15] taken from a Latin translation made by Leo Tuscus of Pisa in the latter half of the twelfth century.[16]

12.   David Selwyn, *The Library of Thomas Cranmer* (Oxford: Oxford Bibliographical Society, 1996); Selwyn lists it as number 213 in his catalog. This work, unknown to the commentators considered below, is located in the Lambeth Palace Library, London.

13.   This folio was printed by Demetrius Doucas from a contemporary recension of the liturgies originating in Cyprus and Rhodes; see E.C. Ratcliff, 'The Prayer of St. Chrysostom: A Note on Cranmer's Rendering and Its Background', *Anglican Theological Review* 42.1 (1960), pp. 4-5 n. 8; see also C.A. Swainson, *The Greek Liturgies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1884), pp. v-vi, 100.

14.   Dowden, *Workmanship*, appendix A; Brightman, *English Rite*, I, p. lxviii. MacCulloch echoes the contention, though without citing specific evidence, that the prayer 'was derived from a 1528 Latin translation, as a misreading of the Greek in both Latin and English confirms'; see *Thomas Cranmer*, p. 416. According to a 1644 edition of Chrysostom's liturgy published in Venice, Demetrius Doucas was responsible for the Latin translation which appeared in the 1528 volume. C.A. Swainson, however, questions this attribution in his *Greek Liturgies*, p. vi.

15.   Ratcliff, 'Prayer of St. Chrysostom: A Note', pp. 1-9. Although Brightman cataloged the 1540 Colmar edition first when considering known translations of the Eastern services in his *Liturgies Eastern and Western*, I (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1896), p. lxxxv, he failed to consider it as a possible source when commenting upon Cranmer's translation of the prayer in *The English Rite*. Ratcliff considers this a 'remarkable' oversight on Brightman's part, an assertion which is borne out when the textual evidence is considered.

16.   Anselm Strittmatter unhesitatingly assigns Tuscus' work to the 1170s, and believes that the Greek manuscript which served as the basis for it dates from a similar period; see 'Notes on Leo Tuscus' Translation of the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom', in Sesto Prete (ed.), *Didascaliae: Studies in Honor of Anselm M. Albareda* (New York: Bernard M. Rosenthal, 1961), pp. 414-24. The dating of the original had previously been attributed to the late eleventh or early twelfth century; see Ratcliff, 'Prayer of St. Chrysostom: A Note', p. 5; Swainson, *Greek Liturgies*, pp. vii, 100, 145. Tuscus' translation was made at the behest of Rainald of Monte Catano, who had been presented with the text of the liturgy by Emperor Manuel I Commenus (reigned 1143–1180) during his visit to Constantinople; Swainson,

It should be noted that the very name Cranmer gave to this prayer, 'A Prayer of Chrysostome', narrows down the potential primary sources as the same prayer occurs, similarly situated, in both the liturgies of Basil the Great and John Chrysostom. In neither of these contexts is the prayer eponymous, instead simply being referred to as the 'prayer of the third antiphon'. Since Cranmer apparently made the attribution to Chrysostom himself, it is very likely that he was not familiar with the *Liturgy of St Basil* (the older of the two compositions) at the time of his translation, which would suggest he did not utilize the 1526 volume.[17]

We are therefore left with three realistic possibilities for the source of Cranmer's translation. The only volumes we can be sure Cranmer owned were the 1537 Paris and the 1539 Basel (recall both contain Erasmus' Latin rendition of the prayer), though when they came into his possession is uncertain. However, we can be almost certain that he did not use either of these as his primary exemplar. No scholar, when dealing with this question, credits the 1539 volume with such authority. By extension, this would also discount the 1537 text, particularly as herein the Latin wording is presented alongside the original Greek.[18] Textual evidence supports a negative claim; Erasmus not only rendered several passages oddly which Cranmer did not, but in a general stylistic sense his translation into Latin differs noticeably from Cranmer's translation into English.[19]

Greek Liturgies, p. 145. A copy of Tuscus' work is reported to have survived in the Augustinian priory at Colmar, where it was presumably discovered by Rhenanus; see Ratcliff, 'Prayer of St. Chrysostom: A Note', p. 3. Curiously, Swainson appears ignorant of the existence of the 1540 volume, instead attributing the first printing of Tuscus to Guillaume Morel, who in 1560 issued in Paris a folio containing his translation of the *Liturgy of St. Chrysostom*; see *Greek Liturgies*, pp. vii, 100.

17.   See Dowden, *Workmanship*, p. 147. In contrast, Ratcliff speculates that Cranmer may well have consulted the 1526 edition, observing in a footnote: 'A copy of the edition of 1526 was lent to John Fisher, bp. of Rochester…by the then bp. of London, Cuthbert Tunstall… Tunstall and Cranmer were on good terms; not improbably Tunstall's copy was made available to Cranmer'; see 'Prayer of St. Chrysostom: A Note', pp. 4-5 n. 8. However, if Cranmer were familiar with Basil, the suggestion that he blithely ignored him in assigning authorship to the prayer is difficult to accept, particularly as Chrysostom's liturgy is essentially an abridgement of Basil's.

18.   As will be discussed in greater detail below, one of the key issues in Cranmer's rendition of the prayer is his incorporation of a mistranslation of the Greek word *sumphōnousin*. Had he been working from the 1537 text, both Erasmus' use of *concordant* and the Greek printed alongside should have precluded such an obvious error.

19.   There does, however, exist the possibility that Cranmer may have used more than one source, perhaps relying on Erasmus as a supplement to his primary text. This is, in fact,

Dowden, who seems to have been unaware of the existence of the 1540 Colmar volume, contends that Cranmer's main source in making the translation was the 1528 edition on the basis of certain semantic similarities. Herein the Latin of the prayer reads:

> Qui communes has et concordes nobis largitus es supplicationes, et qui duobus aut tribus convenientibus in nomine tuo petitiones tribuere pollicitus es: tu et nunc servorum tuorum petitiones ad utilitatem expleas, tribuens nobis in praesenti saeculo cognitionem tuae veritatis et in futuro vitam aeternam concedens.[20]

The textual evidence he cites for favoring the Venetian tome is as follows:[21]

- Cranmer's phrase 'two or three *gathered together* in thy name' seems to have been suggested rather by his way of understanding the 'duobus aut tribus *convenientibus*' of the Latin than by the original, συμφωνοῦσιν [sumphōnousin].[22] Erasmus had given the meaning more correctly as 'quando duo aut tres concordant in nomine tuo'.[23]

- Cranmer's use of 'supplications' does not accord well with Erasmus's *preces*; rather it is closer to the *supplicationes* of the 1528 text.

- The word Cranmer translates as 'petitions' in the Venetian edition is given by *petitiones*; Erasmus, meanwhile, utilizes *postulationes*.

- 'Knowledge of thy truth' Cranmer renders in harmony with the 1528 work, which reads (and is supported by the accompanying Greek text), *cognitionem tuae veritatis*. Erasmus instead has *cognitionem veritatis*.[24]

what Dowden believes occurred; see *Workmanship*, p. 228. Erasmus' prodigious scholarly output seems not to have afforded him sufficient time to lavish painstaking care on all projects. While extremely prolific, certain of his contemporaries, such as Beatus Rhenanus, were more astute editors; see Jan Den Boeff, 'Erasmus and the Church Fathers', in *The Reception of the Church Fathers in the West: From the Carolingians to the Maurists*, II (ed. Irena Backus; Boston: Brill, 2003), pp. 551-52.

20.   Quoted in Dowden, *Workmanship*, p. 227.

21.   See Dowden, *Workmanship*, appendix A. Although Brightman agrees with Dowden's basic thesis, he appears to discount the possibility that Cranmer may have also relied on Erasmus to a modest degree; see *English Rite*, I, p. lxviii.

22.   This is a key point. Note that *convenio* has two possible meanings, either 'come together' or 'agree'. *Sumphōneō*, on the other hand, can only be taken to indicate agreement. *Concordō*, therefore, is the more appropriate Latin cognate.

23.   Emphasis Dowden's. Overall he is correct, except for a minor point. Dowden explicitly states he is searching for the source of Cranmer's translation of the prayer as it appears in the Litany of 1544, and not later versions of the *Book of Common Prayer*. What Dowden failed to recognize was that the word 'together' was only inserted into the prayer in 1559.

24.   This alone is hardly conclusive, though, as by implication it would be 'knowledge of God's truth'.

Taken together, the above four points strongly indicate that Cranmer did not rely on Erasmus' translation to any great degree, if at all.[25] The first also suggests that if Cranmer did use the 1528 text, he translated from the Latin instead of the original Greek. Although Cranmer was versed in Greek, this alone is not particularly troubling, as the Latin would likely have been more expeditious for him to work from.[26] However, even if this were the case, it is unclear why, when confronted with the two possible meanings of *convenientibus*, he would have chosen that which the Greek text printed alongside should have clearly indicated was incorrect.[27]

Ratcliff's hypothesis accounts nicely for this difficulty and several other unsatisfactorily explained lacunae. Below is Leo Tuscus' translation of the prayer as it appears in the 1540 Colmar edition:

> Deus qui has communes, & consonas nobis largitus es orationes: & duobus uel tribus congregatis in nomine tuo dare quae postulant polliceris, ipse nunc seruorum tuorum petitiones, ad id quod conferat, imple: largiendo nobis in praesenti saeculo ueritatis agnitionem, & futuro uitam aeternam daturus.[28]

As Ratcliff notes, there are certain striking similarities between Tuscus' Latin and Cranmer's English:

> They are not limited to 'congregatis', 'gathered', as in the translation of 'sumphōnousin'. They include the initial invocation, 'Deus', '[Almighty] God', which is without equivalent in the Latin of either Erasmus or of the Venetian edition of 1528, or, of course, in the original Greek. They extend, also, to the use of the present tense, 'polliceris', 'dost promise' instead of the Perfect, 'promisisti', 'pollicitus es', employed with greater accuracy by Erasmus and the Venetian translator respectively to render the Greek Aorist participle 'epaggeilamenos'.[29]

25.   Dowden does, however, believe there exists 'something of a parallel' in Erasmus' *ipse nunc quoque domine* to Cranmer's words 'fulfill now, O Lord', which, as he notes, are without precedent in either the Greek or Latin of the 1528 volume; see *Workmanship*, p. 228.

26.   Although K.J. Walsh focuses most of his attention on the latter period of Cranmer's life in his article 'Cranmer and the Fathers, Especially in the *Defence*', *Journal of Religious History* 2 (1980), he cites a manuscript, 'De re sacramentaria', which is relevant to the present discussion because it sheds light onto Cranmer's scholarly method. Suggesting that Cranmer drew up this document to help him in drafting his *Defence*, Walsh notes that 'Greek appears only once in the manuscript. All citations of the Eastern Fathers, *without exception*, are given in a Latin version'; see p. 245, emphasis mine.

27.   Ratcliff further notes that even if Cranmer had translated from the Latin instead of the Greek of the 1528 volume, his presumed familiarity with the Vulgate text of Mt. 18.19 and its use of *consenserint* should have pointed him to the correct contextual meaning of *convenientibus*; see 'Prayer of St. Chrysostom: A Note', p. 2.

28.   Quoted in Ratcliff, 'Prayer of St. Chrysostom: A Note', p. 4.

29.   Ratcliff, 'Prayer of St. Chrysostom: A Note', p. 4.

Taken against the evidence previously presented for the 1528 edition, this proposal compares quite favorably:

- *Congregatis* is unambiguous and leaves no question as to why Cranmer would have rendered this word into English as he did.
- Tuscus also utilizes *petitiones*.
- *Veritatis agnitionem*, while not as close to Cranmer's 'knowledge of thy truth' as the *cognitionem tuae veritatis* of the Venetian text, could nevertheless be understood in similar manner.
- Tuscus has *orationes*, whereas the Venetian volume has *supplicationes*; Cranmer gives it as 'supplications'.

The first point is the strongest indication we have that 'A Prayer of Chrysostome' was translated primarily from Tuscus' text. The only observation that unambiguously favors a case for the 1528 volume is the last. The second is at best neutral, while the penultimate suggests the Venetian edition, but not conclusively. Weighing this evidence alongside that outlined in Ratcliff's quote above, however, seems to seal the case for Tuscus, as there exists no other known manuscript which can account for these peculiar commonalities. Likewise, absent any evidence of another printing of Tuscus' translation prior to Morel's 1560 Parisian folio, we can be quite confident Cranmer's familiarity with this work did indeed result from consulting Rhenanus' 1540 Colmar edition.

The title of the Colmar volume provides a valuable clue as to why Cranmer may have chosen to stress this text; recall the telling *secundum veterem usum*. Ratcliff maintains that this overt reference to the antiquity of the text, combined with Cranmer's penchant for stressing historicity, compelled him to utilize Tuscus rather than a more contemporary Greek text.[30] This claim rings true, as it is congruent with what is known of Cranmer's character and the meticulous nature of his scholarship. Moreover, by the sixteenth century there were extant diverse recensions and translations of the *Liturgy of St Chrysostom*, a fact which may well have further pushed Cranmer to stress Tuscus' translation as authoritative on the basis of its alleged age. In any event, during the Reformation, the Greek Fathers were routinely printed and studied in Latin translation, assuring that even reformers familiar with Greek would have found nothing odd about relying on a translated text.[31]

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30.   Ratcliff, 'Prayer of St. Chrysostom: A Note', pp. 4-5.

31.   See, for instance, Irena Backus' *Historical Method and Confessional Identity in the Era of the Reformation* (1378–1615) (Leiden: Brill 2003), as well as her edited *Reception of the Church Fathers in the West*, vol. II.

1.3. A Critique of Cranmer's Translation

> Mt. 18.19-20: Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.[32]

Ratcliff was impelled to propose an alternative to the 1528 Venetian edition at least in part due to Brian Taylor's short 1958 article in the *Anglican Theological Review*, where he argues that Cranmer, in translating the prayer into English, erred by introducing a scripturally unsubstantiated promise into the text. Much of Taylor's piece, in turn, consists of a response to Brightman's contention in *The English Rite* that Cranmer had misunderstood the intended meaning of *convenientibus* and therefore simply 'imported a misquotation of Mt. 18.19 into his version'.[33] Taylor, who avers the matter was more significant, writes:

> Surely the [original] author of the prayer was recalling not v.20, but the promise in v.19, using language slightly reminiscent of v.20, which is legitimate. Cranmer, presumably by an error, reversed the process: he transferred the promise of v.19 to v.20, which is not legitimate. In fact, when we recite his version of the prayer, we recall a promise which, according to Matthew, Christ never made. To those gathered in Christ's name, his presence is assured, not the granting of their requests—that is promised to those who are in agreement.[34]

His thesis, however, ends rather abruptly. Taylor, who does not question Dowden's hypothesis as to the textual origins of the translation, provides no real insight as to why Cranmer blundered in what he considers to be so blatant a fashion. Unsatisfied by this, Ratcliff points out that Cranmer would have avoided such a haphazard treatment of the material, especially as he had already prior to 1544 'considered the bearing of Mt. 18.19 and 20 upon liturgical prayer'.[35] Summarizing:

> Cranmer's treatment of the two verses, which he understandably takes as constituting one dominical saying, is characteristically careful. He interprets the

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32.   NRSV. The Greek reads as follows, quoted in Taylor, 'Prayer of St. Chrysostom: A Liturgical Note', p. 24 n. 9: *palin legō humin, hoti ean duo humōn sumphōnēsōsin epi tēs gēs peri pantos pragmatos hou ean aitēsōntai, genēsetai autois para tou patros mou tou en ouranois. hou gar eisi duo ē treis sunēgmenoi eis to emon onoma, ekei eimi en mesō autōn.*

33.   Vol. I, p. lxviii.

34.   Taylor, 'Prayer of St. Chrysostom: A Liturgical Note', p. 24.

35.   Ratcliff, 'Prayer of St. Chrysostom: A Note', p. 2. Ratcliff's source for this contention is a memorandum, *De Missa Privata*, which Cranmer produced for discussions held with Lutheran representatives in 1538.

saying as expressive of Christ's will that Christians should gather to offer common prayers for common needs, and as promising that such earnest and unanimous intercession of the Church would be approved, and would also be acceptable to Christ. Cranmer does not confuse the promises; he juxtaposes them, and, unlike the author of the Prayer of St Chrysostom, he avoids the mistake of transferring from the Father to the Son the office of fulfilling petitions. A priori, therefore, it is improbable that Cranmer, when translating the Prayer for his Litany, should have departed from his normal scholarly procedure, and 'transferred the promise of v.19 to v.20', as Mr. Taylor alleges. The 'error' which requires explanation, however, is not Cranmer's handling of Mt. 18.19 and 20, but his rendering, or misrendering of 'sumphōnousin' in the Prayer.[36]

The question now becomes one of with whom, and to what degree, the blame rests for any putative errors associated with Cranmer's translation. Facing us are three options. The first is to side with Dowden, who does not appear greatly perturbed by the matter, suggesting that '[i]t was quite after Cranmer's manner to use some liberty in his renderings, aiming rather at conveying the spirit than at a very close verbal translation'.[37] Given this understanding, Cranmer alone is responsible for any mistakes. Even if he were working from the Latin text of the 1528 edition, the initial translator can at best be faulted for vagueness in utilizing *convenientibus* to render *sumphōnousin*. The second is to agree with Taylor, who views the wording of the prayer as indicative of a significant theological (as opposed to just semantic) error on Cranmer's part. The third is to endorse Ratcliff's assertion that '[t]o Cranmer alone no blame attaches', as he merely 'preferred to render what appeared to be the older and better attested reading, without regard for Mt. 18.19 and 20'.[38] Backing up this last contention is an intriguing two-part argument. The greatest degree of culpability herein is assigned to the unknown author of the prayer, whom Ratcliff judges to be responsible for a radical transfer of promises. To an extent this is a hermeneutical matter, and, as such, need not unduly detain us. Notice, however, that Ratcliff explicitly assumes that the prayer is addressed to Christ and not the Father.[39] If true, this would lend credence to his position. Comparing this claim against the original text, however, reveals it to be unwarranted. There is nothing in the Greek wording which would suggest

36. Ratcliff, 'Prayer of St. Chrysostom: A Note', pp. 2-3.

37. *Workmanship*, pp. 228-29. Walsh's examination of certain of Cranmer's translations indicates that while Cranmer did on occasion translate freely, this was likely either the result of oversight or faulty sources and not, as has sometimes been claimed, indicative of a habitual practice; see 'Cranmer and the Fathers', pp. 227-47.

38. Ratcliff, 'Prayer of St. Chrysostom: A Note', pp. 9, 5.

39. See quote above, as well as Ratcliff, 'Prayer of St. Chrysostom: A Note', p. 8.

that the prayer is directed specifically toward Christ.[40] The second half of Ratcliff's argument, which will be explored in greater detail below, concerns Tuscus, whom he absolves from much of the responsibility for allegedly mistranslating *sumphōnousin* by *congregatis*. His logic in doing so is predicated on the belief that Tuscus was working with a thorough knowledge of the Greek liturgy and 'the interpretation put upon it by authoritative exponents'.[41]

There exists, however, yet another possibility which has not been previously considered: that the primary blame attaches to Leo Tuscus for an infelicitous translation of the prayer.[42] This approach is far more textually conservative and consistent with known manuscripts than that employed by Ratcliff. It also does not proceed from the assumption that the prayer as initially set forth was intrinsically flawed, and so removes any derivative prejudice favoring subsequent translators.

Up to the present point the stress has been upon how Cranmer's rendering affected the internal wording of the prayer in comparison to the original Greek. Now we must consider whether there is any substantive basis for presuming, as Ratcliff does, that Byzantine exegetes and commentators may have altered the theological understanding of this text relative to Mt. 18.19-20 in such a way as to justify (or at least explain) why Tuscus translated as he did.

Ratcliff's claim that Tuscus was more than passingly familiar with the details of contemporary Greek theological debate is plausible, even likely. Not only did he live in Constantinople for a number of years, but Leo was also the brother and student of Hugo Eterianus, whom Swainson describes as 'a friend and favourite' of the Emperor.[43] Better known than his sibling, the erudite Eterianus actively engaged in the theological disputations of his day, in the process gaining a reputation as a vigorous defender of Latin doctrine.[44]

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40. It is easy to see, however, how someone familiar with the wording of Cranmer's translation could have unwittingly arrived at such a tautological conclusion.

41. Ratcliff, 'Prayer of St. Chrysostom: A Note', p. 6.

42. Examining the entire text of Tuscus' translation of the *Liturgy of St John Chrysostom* is well beyond the scope of the present work. There are hints, however, that he may have also translated a bit loosely elsewhere. Swainson, for instance, notes that 'there are indications that the rubrics exhibit at times the explanations of Leo Tuscus (or Thuscus) rather than a mere version of the original', *Greek Liturgies*, p. 145.

43. *Greek Liturgies*, p. 145. Concerning Tuscus' life and work, see Charles Haskins' brief but valuable sketch: 'Leo Tuscus', *The English Historical Review* 33.132 (1918), pp. 492-96.

44. Haskins, 'Leo Tuscus', pp. 492-93. Shortly before Eterianus' death in 1182, Pope Lucius III himself ordained him deacon, subsequently raising him to the office of cardinal; cf. Strittmatter, 'Notes on Leo Tuscus' Translation', p. 412 n. 4.

However, though interesting, this does not shed any light on why the use of *congregatis* should not be regarded as a simple mistranslation, especially as there is no reason to think the Greek text from which Tuscus worked would have departed from *sumphōnousin*.[45] A subsequent mistake of transcription on Rhenanus' part is also unrealistic. Instead it is almost certain that Tuscus bears full responsibility for inserting *congregatis* into the Latin text, as it appears in both in the 1540 Colmar edition and Morel's 1560 Parisian printing of *Liturgiae, sive Missae sanctorum Patrum* despite the two volumes having been prepared from separate (and variant) manuscripts.[46] At the same time, it does seem unlikely that Tuscus was simply careless in utilizing *congregatis*, as he had already earlier translated *sumphōnous* by *consonas.* Noting this, Ratcliff maintains that Tuscus' choice was likely the result of contemporary Byzantine influences. He cites two other works as suggestive of this:[47]

- In the Latin text of the 1528 Venetian edition, *sumphōnous* becomes *concordes*, while *sumphōnousin* is given as *convenientibus.*
- A Latin manuscript discovered around the turn of the twentieth century, dating roughly from the time of Tuscus, translates *sumphōnous* by *consonas*, while *sumphōnousin* is rendered as *convenientibus*.[48]

His evidence for this claim hinges directly on the observation that Tuscus and the other two translators avoid reproducing *sumphōnousin* by a cognate of the word chosen to translate *sumphōnous*. (That both the above-noted works ambiguously render *sumphōnousin* as *convenientibus*, he believes, does not refute Tuscus' choice of *congregatis*.) This alone, however, is far from conclusive, especially as Ratcliff does not otherwise consider these translations beyond noting how they handle the prayer. For this reason it is imperative to say a few words about them. The Latin text of the 1528 volume is purported to have been translated from Doucas' 1526 Greek edition of Chrysostom's liturgy, which was in turn, as has already been discussed, taken from contemporary Cypriot and Rhodian sources.[49] It is highly questionable, therefore, whether

45. Ratcliff concedes that 'there appears to be no trace of any variant' from this wording; see 'Prayer of St. Chrysostom: A Note', p. 6.

46. Strittmatter, 'Notes on Leo Tuscus' Translation', p. 412 n. 4. On this point see also Anselm Strittmatter, '"Missa Grecorum" "Missa Sancti Iohannis Crisostomi": The Oldest Latin Version Known of the Byzantine Liturgies of St. Basil and St. John Chrysostom', *Ephemerides Liturgicae* V.I–IV(1941), p. 3 n. 3.

47. Ratcliff, 'Prayer of St. Chrysostom: A Note', p. 6.

48. The text of the full prayer is reproduced in Strittmatter, 'Missa Grecorum', p. 18. Interestingly, the anonymous translator of this work also prefaces the prayer with the unconventional *Deus.*

49. On the connection to the 1526 volume, see Swainson, *Greek Liturgies*, p. vi.

this source can be regarded as buttressing the argument. More problematic still is the recovered Latin manuscript. Regarded by Strittmatter to have been the work of someone whose knowledge of Greek was limited, the types of errors encountered and their frequency indicate that this translation was undertaken 'in great haste, and quite possibly from a very defective copy'.[50] In light of this, Ratcliff's suggestion that the wording above resulted because all three translators were 'influenced by a traditional or authoritative interpretation of Mt. 18.19 and 20, or of the Prayer or of both' becomes quite problematic.[51]

As to where this presumed exegesis derived from, Ratcliff proposes that Tuscus was swayed by the writings of the Byzantine monk, Euthymius Zigabenus, who, in commenting on Mt. 18.19-20, paraphrases in a manner which conflates the verses. Two distinct questions arise relative to this claim. First, can we be certain Tuscus knew Zigabenus' work, and, if so, did this affect the wording of the translation? Second, was Zigabenus' thinking anomalous, or does evidence exist of a theological tradition in Byzantium favoring such an understanding (which would remove much of the blame from Tuscus' shoulders for his use of *congregatis*)? The initial question is somewhat moot. Quite probably Tuscus was familiar with Zigabenus, but there is no way to conclusively prove, absent any textual evidence of a connection, that this knowledge would have precipitated a deliberate mistranslation. As to the second question, Ratcliff provides no reason to think that Zigabenus' position was consonant with a wider body of theological thought in Byzantium. Thus his assertion that while Zigabenus did not comment on the prayer directly, he may have 'borrowed from an earlier commentator who expressly alluded to the Prayer' is nothing more than unsubstantiated conjecture.[52] Therefore, while it is certainly conceivable that Leo Tuscus may have inserted his own or someone else's deviant interpretation into the Latin text of the prayer, this action would not appear to have had any pretense to legitimacy based on traditional Byzantine understanding.

Moreover, Ratcliff himself has already provided us with evidence that Tuscus translated rather freely. Recall that the invocation *Deus* is without precedent in the original text. Similarly, Tuscus replicates *epaggeilamenos* by the present-tense *polliceris* rather than, as would be more accurate, the perfective form of the verb (something the other Latin translators avoid doing). Curiously, Ratcliff does not consider these disparities to represent an inconsistency

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50. Strittmatter, 'Missa Grecorum', pp. 9-10.

51. Ratcliff, 'Prayer of St. Chrysostom: A Note', p. 7.

52. Ratcliff, 'Prayer of St. Chrysostom: A Note', p. 8. On the previous points, see pp. 7-8.

in his argument. Yet if Tuscus was a careful translator whose choice of *congregatis* only resulted from his acquaintance with a 'traditional or authoritative interpretation' of the prayer, then why would he elsewhere employ such distinctive turns of phrase? Furthermore, even if he were influenced by Zigabenus' exegesis (which, in any event, did not pertain directly to the prayer), why did he not translate *sumphōnousin* by the more ambiguous but textually safer *convenientibus*?[53] Given these observations, it can legitimately be concluded that Tuscus was not overly concerned with producing a literal translation.

The preceding consideration of Tuscus' initial rendition and Cranmer's subsequent copying of the prayer into English raises a puzzling, albeit ancillary, question which requires a brief mention. Greek Orthodox liturgical texts have faithfully preserved the use of *sumphōnousin* to the present day. Similarly, Church Slavonic service books translate *sumphōnousin* by *soglasuiushchimsia,* a word which can only be taken to mean 'to be in agreement'. This is likewise the case with the Arabic and Armenian.[54] Examination of English-language texts, however, is likely to give the careful reader pause, as in many (though not all) of them the prayer is reproduced with the word 'gathered' inserted where we would instead expect to see 'agreed'. This is perplexing and needs to be accounted for, as it seems to support the contention that there are extent among Orthodox Christians various interpretations of this text. Fortunately, the missing pieces are not terribly difficult to fill in.

The first English-language translation of the Orthodox rites to gain wide acceptance was not taken directly from Greek manuscripts, but rather from nineteenth-century Church Slavonic texts. First published in 1906, this work represented the culmination of an eleven-year effort by the renowned American translator, Isabel Florence Hapgood.[55] It is not hard to imagine that

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53.   As for the other two translators choosing to utilize *convenientibus*, consider Taylor's point about the author of the prayer recalling the promise in Mt. 18.19 'using language slightly reminiscent' of v. 20. Especially given that one of them appears to have been handicapped by a limited knowledge of Greek, it is not at all improbable that they may have found the original wording of the prayer slightly confusing and thus purposely chose to translate *sumphōnousin* in a vague manner.

54.   As Ratcliff himself acknowledges, in 'Prayer of St. Chrysostom: A Note', p. 9 n. 16.

55.   Earlier and less comprehensive attempts, such as John Glen King's *The Rites and Ceremonies of the Greek Church, in Russia* (London: W. Owen, 1772) and James N.W.B. Robertson's *The Divine Liturgies of Our Fathers Among the Saints, John Chrysostom and Basil the Great with that of the Presanctified Preceded by the Hesperinos and the Orthos* (London: David Nutt, 1894) never gained wide acceptance and are today all but forgotten. King (p. 249) relied heavily on Cranmer in making his translation; aside from a few minor differences, the two are essentially the same. Robertson, in contrast, translated the prayer more literally: *Thou that*

Hapgood, a life-long Episcopalian, would have been influenced in her render-ing by the wording of the prayer as she was most familiar with it, *directly the result of Cranmer's translation*. And in fact, she confirms the very same in her preface: 'I alone am personally responsible for everything…except in the case of the incomparable rendering of the Prayer of St Chrysostom, which I have taken from the Episcopal Book of Common Prayer'.[56] In a curiously circular fashion, Hapgood thus introduced into the Orthodox liturgy an unsanctioned change of wording first made in the twelfth century by a Latin translator!

As to why this error is also encountered in English-language Orthodox publications not the product of Hapgood's hand, the answer appears to be that some subsequent translators have placed more emphasis on capturing the beauty and meter of previous renderings than on adhering to the original wording. In any event, since Cranmer's version of this prayer was probably known to them primarily through its inclusion in Hapgood's volume, it would have been judged authoritative. Indicative that the error has been perpetuated via this route, there exist no texts known to me wherein *sumphōnousin* is sub-stituted by a word with an alternate meaning outside of this context. Conse-quently, any support modern Orthodox translations of the prayer may have been thought to provide Ratcliff's hypothesis is entirely illusory. Instead, the above attests to the remarkable tenacity of this error, pointing out an interest-ing observation about translation and translators that deserves investigation and comment in its own right.

hast given us grace for these common and accordant prayers, who to even two or three agreeing *in thy name, hast promised to grant their requests: do thyself even now fulfil the petitions of thy servants as may be fitting, granting us in this present world the knowledge of thy truth, and in that which is to come bestowing life eternal* [emphasis mine].

56.   Text of prayer in Hapgood's *Service Book of the Holy Orthodox-Catholic (Greco-Russian) Church* (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1906), p. 83, reads: *O Thou, who hast given us grace at this time, with one accord, to make our common supplications unto thee; and dost promise that when two or three are gathered together in thy Name thou wilt grant their requests. Fulfil now, O Lord, the desires and petitions of thy servants as may be most expedient for them; granting them in this world knowledge of thy truth, and in the world to come, life everlasting.* This is without doubt the best known English-language version, and it has been reprinted numerous times since it was originally published. As to why the text has not been emended, I can only speculate this is because in Orthodox liturgical practice the prayer is a secret prayer of the celebrant, meaning that most worshipers would have no idea that its wording was incongruous. Furthermore, considering that that many Orthodox churches in the English-speaking world are still served by priests who are not native English speakers, it is not all that surprising that this error is rarely remarked upon.

1.4. Concluding Comments

Based on the internal similarities enumerated herein, we can be quite confident that Cranmer utilized Rhenanus' 1540 Colmar volume in translating the 'Prayer of Chrysostome'. However, the possibility that he relied on more than one exemplar to assist him in his labors cannot be ruled out definitively. The obvious candidate for a secondary source is the 1528 Venetian edition, although if Cranmer consulted it he must have wilfully ignored the Greek text positioned alongside the Latin, wherein *sumphōnousin* was plainly printed.

That Cranmer apparently chose to emphasize Tuscus' rendering as authoritative on the basis of its antiquity is understandable. How then are we to adjudicate culpability for the subsequent perpetuation of Tuscus' mistranslation? Ratcliff considers Cranmer alone blameless, arguing that he 'accepted Leo's error as representing the authentic Greek; and we may legitimately suppose that weighing 'congregatis' against 'sumphōnousin', he found the former, on internal grounds, to be the more probable reading'.[57] This conclusion, however, is unsatisfactory. Even if we excuse Cranmer for assuming that Tuscus carried the weightier claim when compared against more contemporary Greek recensions, the archbishop nevertheless bears at least partial responsibility for either failing to notice or disregarding the implications his translation had with respect to Mt. 18.19-20. This is the case whether or not we agree that the original author of the prayer intended to transpose the promises contained therein.

A few words are in order concerning this last point. While the matter is obviously subject to interpretation, it is this author's opinion that Taylor's hypothesis is correct. Taylor, it will be recalled, believed that the intent of the original prayer was to invoke v. 19 using language 'slightly reminiscent' of v. 20. The other option—interpreting the Greek text as deliberately transferring from the Father to the Son the act of fulfilling petitions—seems rather presumptuous lacking specific evidence to the contrary. This is particularly true as in its original context the prayer ends with a trinitarian invocation in the doxology, suggesting a relationality lost without these final words.

As for whether Zigabenus exercised an influence on Tuscus' decision to utilize *congregatis*, it is impossible to say for certain. Absent additional information, Tuscus' reasons for not replicating *sumphōnousin* literally into Latin will remain a mystery. The peculiar nuances of his rendering, though, are not just confined to how a single word was handled. Quite contrary to what Cranmer

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57.   Ratcliff, 'Prayer of St. Chrysostom: A Note', p. 9.

must have assumed, Tuscus appears to have translated loosely and without due regard for maintaining the integrity of the original text.

In the end, however, whether Cranmer employed literary license a bit freely or was simply misled, he introduced into the English language a prayer that had hitherto been unknown outside of Eastern Christendom. While he cannot escape a degree of fault attaching to him as a scholar and theologian, to emphasize this would be to overlook the rich spiritual legacy bequeathed to the Anglican tradition by the 'Prayer of Chrysostome'. His translation, though not perfectly faithful to the original Greek, is a rendering both masterful and pleasing to the ear. As such, the prayer stands as a testament to Thomas Cranmer's ingenuity and perseverance. That is its proper legacy.