



St Michael & All Angels, Chetwynd

The Collect for the Second Sunday of Lent

(Book of Common Prayer)

Almighty God, who seest that we have no power of ourselves to help ourselves: Keep us both outwardly in our bodies, and inwardly in our souls; that we may be defended against all adversities which may happen to the body, and from all evil thoughts which may assault and hurt the soul; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

History, doctrine, language and poetics are inextricably interwoven in the collects. This one's history has seen it travel to us via the 1549 Prayer Book, the eleventh century Sarum Missal, and before that the tenth century Gregorian Sacramentary, which had collected much earlier liturgical material.

Its use of English language was fashioned by Cranmer and his colleagues. They were responsible for the typical 'doubling' of an idea in "assault and hurt". They also chose "soul" for the Latin word whose literal meaning is "mind". Further, the Reformers changed the petition which a literal translation would have resulted in "*Keep us inwardly and outwardly*". Altering the order of the words and adding "in our bodies" and "in our souls" resulted in the petition being echoed by the next section of the prayer, with its use of the words "body" and "soul".

Very often there is a sombre brevity evident in the underlying Latin collects, which usually leave their mark on the English versions. Some of them, however, have roots which reflect in their wording a more elaborate approach. These often originate (or partly so) in what is referred to as Gallican, as opposed to Roman, liturgy. From the fourth to the eighth centuries, Gallican liturgy, a family of loosely related rites, prevailed in large areas of the (former) Roman Empire, especially in France (Gaul). The worshipping style was relatively wordy. By contrast, the city of Rome, and some areas in north Africa which had close links with the city, had liturgy marked with a concise, pithy style. Gradually, the Roman approach came to predominate, a process accelerated in the eighth and early ninth centuries when Pepin the Short (King of the Franks 751-768), followed by his son Charlemagne (King from 768, Emperor from 800-14), vigorously promoted the Roman rite throughout their vast European dominions as a way of cementing, or creating, unity. Gallican elements never totally disappeared though: the Roman tradition absorbed and preserved many of them.

This assimilation of some Gallican characteristics by the Roman liturgy results in collects of a more elaborate nature.

This collect invokes God's loving protection of our physical and spiritual selves. And by extension, we are reminded to pray for those who are experiencing suffering, pain and anguish – all who are facing adversities which “happen to the body” as well as those which “assault and hurt the soul”.

James Graham

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