

A Description of the Middle Cornish Tregear Manuscript

1) Translation and Provenance

Until the Rev. John Mackechnie's discovery in 1949 of thirteen Catholic homilies, among the papers of the Puleston family of Flintshire, no Middle Cornish prose manuscript of any considerable length was known. It was catalogued as Add. MS. 46397 when the British Museum acquired the papers in 1947, but Mackechnie was the first to notice the manuscript and identify it as Cornish.¹ He died before he could publish the edition that he had intended, so it was not until 1969 that an edition was published in typescript by Christopher Bice and copies were made available to members of the Cornish Language Board.²

The homilies comprise the longest extant manuscript of Cornish, some thirty thousand words of continuous prose. Unlike the other major manuscripts, it is not an original composition but a translation from an exemplar printed in English in 1555 for the Bishop of London, Edmund Bonner.³ Thirteen homilies form the latter part of his treatise *A profitable and necessary doctrine, with certayne homelyes adioyned therevnto*: ten by John Harpesfeld the Archdeacon of London, two by Oliver Pendilton and one by the

¹ The notes made by John Mackechnie are unfortunately no longer available, according to his daughter Mrs. Elizabeth MacPherson of Flixton, Manchester (personal communication, March 1998).

² Christopher Bice, *The Tregear Manuscript - Homelyes xiii in Cornysche*, 1969. Republished in photocopy as *The Tregear Homilies*, Cornish Language Board, Sutton Coldfield, 1994. Although all references made here refer to this edition, use has also been made of an unpublished, computerised edition (1975-98) by Andrew Hawke, University of Wales, Aberystwyth.

³ Edmund Bonner, *A Profitable and necessary doctrine, with certayne homelyes adioyned therevnto*, J. Cawodde, London, 1555. An investigation by Andrew Hawke showed that many of the existing copies are pseudo-editions, containing inconsistent errors and slight variations of type, compiled from sections of several print runs (personal communication). It is unclear how many complete editions existed.

Bishop himself⁴. The Tregear manuscript is titled simply in English “Homelyes xiiij in Cornysche” on the first page, without the title-page, table of contents and the Bishop’s preface of the original. According to the Catholic custom of the time (although not in the English exemplar), a holy name and Latin title usually heads each page.⁵

Only the first twelve homilies appear in the Cornish versions, each signed or initialled at the end by Tregear, above the author’s name.⁶ The eleventh and twelfth homilies are signed likewise by Thomas Stephyn. In the twelfth, his signature follows that of Tregear, but in the preceding homily it appears exceptionally at the bottom of the penultimate page, possibly in error for the last page. Moreover, the twelfth is signed *per Johan. Tregear clericum* and *per me Thomas Stephyn Clericum*, whereas all previous signatures instead employ *Quod* rather than *per* in the Latin.⁷ It is possible that this change in the form of the signatures may have marked the end of the original translation and that Harpesfeld’s final homily was never included.

The thirteenth homily is anomalous because it is not translated from Harpesfeld’s exemplar, but instead substituted in another hand from an unidentified source. Although dealing with the same subject as the original thirteenth homily, transubstantiation, the entire contents and format are different. It is longer than the others, much less tidy than Tregear and contains more marginal notes. Damage to the last six pages may account for the lack of a signature. Several lines of additional text unusually follow the dedication,

⁴ The 5th is signed E.B. for Bonner; the 7th and 8th are by Pendilton and the rest by Harpesfeld.

⁵ Nearly always “JHESUS”, “EMANUEL”, “SABAOTH”, “ADONAY”, or various spellings of “HOMOUSYON”; also “MANUS”, “ALPHA”, “EST VNIGENITUS”, “IN TE JHESU SPES MEA” occur once. About a quarter of pages in the first twelve homilies have no holy name; a few have no Latin title.

⁶ Bonner wrote the fifth homily but his initials are not included in the Cornish version.

⁷ Tregear normally signs *Quod Johannes Tregear clericus* or *Quod J.T.*, sometimes abbreviated; the formula *Quod thomas stephyn clerc* is used by Stephyn in the eleventh homily.

comprising a sentence of Cornish, a Latin quotation and a fragment of a sentence of Cornish. While the earlier homilies quote briefly from Latin, here it amounts to over a quarter of the content, requiring extensive explanation in the following Cornish. In all but two unheaded pages, however, the headings are Cornish: *(An) Sacrament an a(u)lter* occur three times, once *an Sacrament a corf ha gois agen saviour Jesus* and ten slightly differently worded versions of a couplet along the lines of *(An) Bara ha(n) gwyn dir gerriow Dew (ew) trylis the corf ha gois christ e thew*, which was evidently the formula used in the administration of the bread and wine.⁸

It might be expected, had Tregear possessed a complete copy of the printed English, that he would have translated the original thirteenth homily that was available. If he did so, it must have been lost and subsequently replaced with an alternative on the same subject. By the time of the second work, Harpesfeld's final homily could no longer have been available for translation, since it was not used, but this does not explain the coincidence that the heading *(An) Sacrament an a(ulter)* is taken from part of the English title.⁹ Unless the second translator knew exactly what was missing from memory, it would otherwise be required that a table of contents existed at one time in the Cornish versions and was lost in a second incident.

If Tregear's copy of the English was incomplete, the replacement text may have been supplied at a later date, when the contents page was found to describe a missing thirteenth homily on the subject of transubstantiation. Had this been already appended to the English versions at the time of the first translation, it is difficult to see why Tregear

⁸ [T=Tregear MS.] Unheaded T 59a, 60; three are T 59, 60a, 61; one is T 61a; ten are T 62-66a.

⁹ Bonner, *op.cit.*, table of contents.

himself would not have continued the work. The new homily must have been supplied and translated after comparison between the two versions showed an omission. This might suggest that frequent reference was being made to both versions. The fact that Stephyn apparently only collaborated in the two penultimate homilies might support the idea that the manuscript originally ended after twelve.

It is nonetheless possible that the present thirteenth homily was produced by Stephyn at a later date.¹⁰ Another candidate might be a certain Richard Logan, whose marginal signature appears on the manuscript. Neither of their names have been found elsewhere, despite much speculation that Glasney College in Penryn may have been the source of several of the extant manuscripts of Middle Cornish.¹¹ It is not clear where the homilies were translated, nor how they came into the possession of the Puleston family.¹²

The translator who signed himself *Johannes Tregear, clericus* is likewise unknown except in two references to (John) Tregre(a)re made by Dr. William Borlase.¹³ Three words are quoted, none of which occur in the homilies: his silence is strange if indeed he had seen them. Although it may have been a relatively common name, it is unlikely that he referred to a namesake of Tregear. Literacy in Cornish was mostly restricted to the clergy at a time when it was a socially inferior vernacular speech. Only the church needed to be able to communicate with laymen whose principal language was Cornish. The whole

¹⁰ No graphological comparison of his signature with the later hand has yet been made; if the last homily was translated after some time had elapsed, this alone might account for any apparent differences, even spelling habits. Yet in the available time for translation of the whole work, this is highly unlikely.

¹¹ e.g. N.J.A. Williams, *Cornish Today*, Kernewek Dre Lyther, Sutton Coldfield, 1995: §12.7.

¹² The Rev. Richard Rutt, former Bishop of St. Germans, began an attempt to place the original English version by use of the the Latin references in the text, but it may well be no longer extant and it has never yet been identified (personal communication, March 1998).

¹³ In the Cornish vocabulary, the abbreviation “J.T., Tregere MS.”, William Borlase, *Observations on the Antiquities, Monumental and Historical, of the County of Cornwall*, London, 1769, 2nd ed., reprinted EP Publishing, Wakefield, 1973. Also “John Tregear”, Borlase MS., Cornwall County Records Office.

purpose of the translation was so that the homilies could be read as sermons in church. Among the very few clerics who may have been able to write in Cornish, it is likely that Tregear was a considerable figure whose other work has since been lost.

The Bishop's title-page makes it clear that the homilies were "to be read within his diocese of London, of all persons, vycars, and curates vnto theyr parishoners, vpon sondayes, and holydayes", but the existence of the Cornish versions demonstrates that they were circulated more widely. The reign of Queen Mary began strenuous efforts towards a counter-reformation in England; and the Catholic content of the homilies is plain. Cornwall was a stronghold of Catholicism, no doubt because penetration by new religious practices must have been severely curtailed by incomprehension of English on the part of a considerable proportion of speakers of Cornish.

This may explain why, unlike in England, there was a need to translate the homilies into Cornish for use in sermons read to the masses. Whether the layman understood the exactitudes of doctrine in either language is open to considerable doubt, but the homilies may well have been a Catholic response to the use of the vernacular by protestantism, in place of Latin, to base the new religious order in the spread of knowledge and literacy. At least a token effort was required to provide sermons in a language intelligible by the lay congregation, since only Latin possessed the antique ceremonial appeal to found religious observance upon the incomprehension of the faithful. The title given for the original thirteenth homily by Bonner, "Of certen Aunswers agaynst some common obiections,

made against the sacrament of the Aultare”, demonstrates clearly that the Catholic church was forced to respond to a new challenge in the vernacular.¹⁴

The homilies could not have been translated until 1555 at the very earliest, after the originals were published in that year. However, it is not certain how late afterwards this could have happened, whether in the reign of Mary or that of Elizabeth. An early date seems most likely, given that the circulation of explicitly Catholic sermons was a matter of official policy until 1558. Even so, during the early part of Elizabeth’s reign, such material could have been preached without restriction, since it was necessary to tolerate Catholics while they remained a powerful threat to the regime. After this, the use of Cornish may have enabled the sermons to be preached undetected in Cornwall, perhaps into the 1560s at least. There is no record of instructions to circulate the homilies any further than London. Yet the likelihood must remain that the impetus for the translation came from the hierarchy of the established church, the source of the original sermons in English. This would date the manuscript more narrowly to 1555-58, during the reign of Queen Mary.

2) Syntax and Vocabulary

Apart from the Tregear manuscript, the bulk of extant Middle Cornish consists of plays written in rhyme and a fixed syllabic metre. Even though the literature of this period is far more extensive than any other period of the living language, any study of normal syntax based solely on texts written in verse would be of doubtful value. As a result, there has been no extensive syntactical study of any period of Cornish and serious difficulties remain in that field. The homilies have been largely ignored in terms of syntax, even

¹⁴ Bonner, *op.cit.*, table of contents.

though no better source of continuous prose exists in the language. Only brief attempts have been made to use them in this way, but any such conclusions may be misplaced without taking proper account of the effects of the original English syntax upon the translation.¹⁵ This is a subject too large to be exhaustively addressed here, but a short discussion will serve to illustrate that the syntax may belong more to English than to Cornish.

It is obvious even from a casual comparison of the English text with Tregear's version that English syntax has been largely retained, so that the sense of the Cornish is frequently affected. The effect of this varies from a slightly unidiomatic feel to being quite incomprehensible, but leaves much of the material open to doubt in terms of any study of syntax. The text is replete with examples, but the opening sentence of the first homily shows the quality of translation as well as any:-¹⁶

Ima an profet Dault in peswar vgans ha nownsag psalme ow exortya oll an bobyll the ry prayse hag honor the du ha thy servya in lowendar ha gans perfect colonow the reiosya in sight agan creator ha redemar.

“The Prophette Daudid in his fore score and nintenth psalme, exhortyng all people to synge prayse to almighty god, to serue him in gladnes, and reioyse in his sight...”

¹⁵ e.g. Williams, *op.cit.*, §21.6-18. Reliance is placed on the homilies more than any other document of Cornish in the examples cited. The direct nature of the translation is overlooked here.

¹⁶ T 1, lines 1-3; Harpesfeld in Bonner, *op.cit.*, 1st homily, lines 1-9.

The translator has kept the word-order of the original as well as he was able, although he adds a verb. The resulting separation of the auxiliary and subject *Ima an profet David* from the verb and its particle *ow exortya* gives a clumsy effect. The order of the numerals should not follow the English, since in Cornish the smaller number and the noun to which it refers should precede the number of scores. In translating the phrase “... (and) to serue him...”, just the verbal noun and possessive **hay servya* would have been better than the use of an apparent preposition in *ha thy servya* in following the English too closely. Although the sentence is unidiomatic, any speaker would have understood; provided that they knew the remaining vocabulary, either left untranslated or given a superficially Cornish form.

By contrast, this sentence from the seventh homily is one of many that a speaker of Cornish might have found difficult to follow:¹⁷

In kythsam vhell benefitt ma, agan mam egglos catholyk, a rug agan kerengyak savyowre Jhesu crist, keffris therag y virmans ha in y pascion hay virmans, a rug appoyntia hag ordenya thenny the vos kerengyak mam thegan gwetha ha preservia rag confort hag eghas the enevow, ha the vos pyllar an gwryoneth in oll agen dawnger.

“And this hye, and heauenlye benefyte, is the holye catholyke churche, whiche our deare, and dreadfull Sauyour, both before, and after his paynefull death, dyd ordeyne, and appoynt, to be for euer to vs, a moost louynge, & tender mother, a perpetual preseruacion for our soule helth, and a pyllar of truth, in al oure doubtfull daungers.”

The attempt has again been made to preserve the order of the English rather than impose its syntax, but the result has been to distort that of the Cornish. Apart from minor problems such as the adjective preceding the noun in *kerengyak savyowre*, a more important structural complaint is that the second relative clause does not seem to refer back to an available noun because *Jhesu crist* is contained in the first relative clause. This leaves the whole sentence without a main clause and the listener fighting to resolve the meaning, unsure of subject and object. The words *eghas the enevow* convey very little, certainly not “oure soule helth”. The tautology in *gwetha ha preservia rag confort* for just “preservation” is a common trick in the homilies, probably in an attempt to achieve an educated register.

Nance, who wrote several short articles on the homilies, took the view that “If any literary value whatever attaches to these old homilies this belongs to the English versions...” and comments that “John Tregear was not a skilled translator”.¹⁸ This would seem to be fair comment, although he did not mean that the homilies were of limited value in the study of Cornish (indeed he made much use of them in the later form of his revived Unified Cornish).¹⁹ It would be unwise nonetheless to regard them as representative of normal syntax in contemporary Middle Cornish. Since it is likely that native syntax occurs

¹⁷ T 30a, lines 15-19; Pendilton in Bonner, *op.cit.*, 7th homily, lines 26-32.

¹⁸ R.M. Nance, Old Cornwall, Vol. 1 (1951), *More about the Tregear Manuscript*, pp. 22-23; also *Zeitschrift Für Celtische Philologie*, Vol. 24 (1954), *Cornish Words in the Tregear MS.*, p.1.

¹⁹ The greater part of his Unified Cornish may be found in R.M. Nance, *A New Cornish-English Dictionary*, Federation of Old Cornwall Societies, St. Ives, 1938. [= NCED] Republished with emendations and a reverse dictionary in *A New Cornish Dictionary*, Dyllansow Truran, Redruth, 1990, reprinted 1994. This is a useful tool, but contains hypothetical entries and re-spellings; there are few line references to texts.

only in such instances as the translation is forced to depart from the form of the English, a great deal of uncertainty remains in the subject.

From a lexical point of view, the homilies are impoverished in their use of Cornish, mostly as a result of the wholesale inclusion of English words where, in many cases, it is certain that the translators could have used their Cornish counterparts. According to Nance, this was “... chiefly I am afraid out of sheer slackness...”, an opinion which seems valid in the light of the range of vocabulary displayed elsewhere in the homilies.²⁰ Even so, the proportion of borrowed words (ignoring the Latin content) varies from page to page between about a fifth and a quarter of the text.

Words such as *sight*, *vttermost*, *face*, *part*, *contrary*, *office*, *idiot*, *bolde*, *scripture* and *trade* are simply copied from the English, presumably because the translator made no effort to re-phrase the work in Cornish.²¹ A similar practice is to slightly re-spell words taken from the English, such as *sufficiant* “sufficient”, *Vaynglori* “vayne glory”, *plenly* “playnely”, *ignorans* “ignoraunce”, *perfeccion* “perfection”, *penans* “penance”, *sertan* “certayne”, *costes* “coastes”, *nacions* “nations”, *specyally* “speciallye”.²² The third technique, just as frequent, superficially Cornicises the form of the word (and often alters the grammatical function) borrowed from the English text, for example *exortya* “exhortyng”, *consernya* “concerning”, *pacifies* “pacified”, *walkyow* “walke”, *has purgyas* *has scurryas* “purged it, and scoured it”, *violatia* “violatyng”, *notys ha merkys* “noted”, *appoyntya* “appoynte”, *favera* “fauour”, *yembracya* “embrace”.²³

²⁰ R.M. Nance, *Old Cornwall*, Vol. 1 (1951), p.23.

²¹ T 1.3, 3a.15, 6.14, 12.13, 19.7, 25a.4, 30.8, 41.14, 51a.12, 57a.11.

²² T 1.4, 6.3, 13.16, 20.16, 26a.4, 32a.10, 37a.12, 43a.19, 49.8, 55.1.

²³ T 1.1, 3.2, 10a.18, 16a.8, 22.17, 29a.1, 34a.14, 41a.5, 51.2, 58.10.

It might be argued that the inclusion of such words demonstrated the linguistic poverty in which Cornish had declined by this period, rather than the more simple explanation that English words were allowed to remain in place for a conscious effect. If the former were so, it seems strange that such unnecessary words as *only*, *in dede*, *not*, *food(e)* and *so* were included.²⁴ It can scarcely be argued that Tregear did not know the Cornish for such words. An illustrative comparison is that of *deswethys* “declared” and *declarys* “declare”, both given for the same verb in the original.²⁵ Both *talkya* and *cowse* are found for “to talk” and *kerthes* is found as well as *walkea* for “to walk”.²⁶ In the seventh homily, the words *(an) kynsa ew antiquite*, *henew cotheneb...* are a clear demonstration that Tregear was well aware of his deliberate failure to translate the English, inserting his own explanation that would not have been required had he done so in the first place.²⁷

It must be concluded that a macaronic style was not purely the result of a poor translation, but was at least partly a matter of design. There may not have been such an advanced religious terminology available in contemporary Cornish as there was in English, but this cannot be used to explain the vast majority of untranslated vocabulary. Furthermore, a significant number of English words have been inserted that were not in the original. On the first page alone are examples such as *praysse*, *honor*, *perfect*, *remembrans*, and *according*.²⁸ Nance cites Tregear’s insertion of the invented word *bacbytya*, a perfect example of Tregear’s macaronic Cornish, comparing it to the *brezoneg*

²⁴ T 1a.8 & *passim*, 1.8 & *passim*, 1a.9 & *passim*, 51a.17 (nine times), 1a.14 & *passim*.

²⁵ T 12.1, 2.13.

²⁶ [n=marginal note] T 49a.19, 7a.7, 57a.14, 55n.2.

²⁷ T 34a.6.

²⁸ T 1.2, 1.2, 1.3, 1.9, 1.11.

beleg “priests’ Breton” ridiculed in Brittany.²⁹ Yet Tregear was certainly a native speaker of Cornish, capable of idiomatic style when he was forced to depart from his exemplar. A revealing deletion on the first page shows *kepar ha* altered to *kepar dell* (meaning “just as”) before a verb, where originally a noun had been intended.³⁰

Since the original from which the thirteenth homily was translated has never been traced, it is more difficult to evaluate the quality of the work. The same tendencies can be inferred, however. Either failure to translate or the addition of English words must account for examples such as *anger, only, Insted, not, honour, mantall, substance, consecration, shap* and *badd maner*.³¹ Similarly, words such as *regardya, despisea, whippys, endewis, sittis, seperatis, commandias, remaynea, walkias* and *transfvrmya* have been given the thin disguise of Cornish form.³² Even so, it is noticeable that there are far fewer words of English origin than in the earlier homilies.

The Tregear manuscript is a testament to the relative social prestige of the English and Cornish languages in the mid sixteenth century, a unique confirmation of an accepted history for which the evidence is otherwise surprisingly fragmentary. Although in part the translations are poor because of the lack of skill of the translators and their adherence to the word-order of the original English texts, it is beyond dispute that they chose to leave words untranslated to produce an elevated register of Anglo-Cornish. There can be little doubt that Tregear and his fellow clerics were highly literate in both English and Latin, the prestige languages - though their first language was probably Cornish. That the bulk of the

²⁹ R.M. Nance, *Old Cornwall*, Vol. 1 (1951), p.23.

³⁰ T 1.4.

³¹ T 59.11, 59.12, 59a.8, 59a.12, 59a.15, 60.2, 60a.18, 62.12, 63.17, 65a.5.

³² T 59.10, 59.13, 59a.11, 60.7, 60a.1, 61.22, 62.19, 63.3, 64a.26, 66a.16.

population spoke Cornish in at least part of Cornwall is the very reason that the manuscript came to exist.

3) Linguistic change in Middle Cornish

Apart from providing lexical items and forms found nowhere else in recorded Cornish, the homilies document the latter part of the Middle Cornish period, a link between the earlier Middle Cornish texts and the fragmentary remains of Late Cornish. The *Charter Fragment*, *Passion Poem* and the three plays of the *Ordinalia* are considered early Middle Cornish on linguistic grounds (fourteenth and fifteenth century); the *Life of Meryasek* is dated 1504, but may well have been composed earlier; the *Creacion of the World* bears William Jordan's date of 1611 (so has been described as late) but its language is substantially the same as the *Ordinalia* and it was certainly composed much earlier. Although some later alterations were made to these last two, particularly the latter, only the Tregear manuscript is essentially a document of the later Middle Cornish period in its composition.³³

The homilies therefore represent a transitional period in the history of Cornish. Consequently, they occupy a central position in any developmental study. The major areas of potential change, as well as syntax and vocabulary discussed above, are in the morphology and phonology of the language. Few studies have been made of the former: the subject is a huge one, which needs to be addressed on a developmental basis through comparison of all of the major texts.³⁴ However, it is possible to present a brief analysis

³³ For these and a short discussion, see Williams, *op.cit.*, § 14.2.

³⁴ See brief comments in Williams, *op.cit.*, §18.1-17, 19.1-6.

based on a single text; and this has been attempted below in relation to the homilies. It is likewise beyond the scope of the present study to examine historical developments in the phonology of Cornish.³⁵ Nonetheless, a brief discussion of phonological features not dealt with elsewhere completes the study below.

4) Morphology

There are three major areas of morphology that deserve discussion with regard to the homilies: firstly, the pronominal system and its relationship to inflected verb forms and prepositional pronouns; secondly forms of the verb and verbal endings occurring in the text; lastly the conjugated prepositions or prepositional pronouns which are found in Cornish and characteristic of Celtic languages. The separate treatment of pronouns and prepositional pronouns may be justified by saying that the pronominal element of the latter is not the focus here: perhaps it would be best to describe them instead as conjugated prepositions; and then the order chosen below immediately seems more natural.

i) Pronouns

There is not a great deal of variation in the forms of the pronouns found in the manuscript. Firstly it should be noted that reduplicated and emphatic forms, found elsewhere in Cornish manuscripts, do not appear. The normal range of independent pronouns are found, however, most often beginning a phrase in the “abnormal” word-order: that is, pronoun and relative particle followed by the third person singular of the

³⁵ The only full study is Kenneth George, *A Phonological History of Cornish*, PhD thesis, Brest, 1985.

verb. Far from being abnormal, it is apparently the most common word-order in Cornish and the primary reason why so many independent pronouns are found.³⁶

My a vyn settya envy intre te ha haes an venyn... [13.12]

I wysce ath face te a tehbbyr the vara [6.14-15]

ha eff a ros thethe gouernars da hag orders [40.13-14]

hy a gemeras ran an frut hag an debbras [3.9]

ny a ra vnderstondia mab Jonas [45a.10-11]

In delma why a yll lymmyn percevya [16a.18]

y a ra errya the worth an feith [18a.8]

In fact, there would be little else to say on the subject of independent pronouns, except to comment on the variations in orthography, were it not for the suggestion by Dr. Nicholas Williams that there existed an allegro variant of the first and second person singular pronouns.³⁷ He points out that *me* and *te* are the common forms (*passim*) but *my* is far less common (in fact it only occurs three times in the homilies). The form *ty* is not found, although it does occur in other texts.³⁸ It must be pointed out, however, that the orthography uses the graphs <e> and <y> (sometimes also <i>) in some words in apparently free variation. This is discussed further below under phonology, but examples such as *leverys – lyuerys* and *gylwall – gelwall* are a case in point.³⁹ The very occurrence

³⁶ The term “abnormal word-order” is borrowed from descriptions of other Celtic languages, often used to describe this order in Welsh. It is not particularly appropriate to Cornish, however.

³⁷ Williams, *op.cit.*, § 18.2.

³⁸ One apparent occurrence of “ty” at 7a.14 is in fact a verb “to swear”, not the pronoun.

³⁹ T 53.19, 1a.17, 65.11, 48.22.

of *my* as an independent pronoun, where *me* might equally be expected, calls this conclusion into doubt. This orthographical variation is in fact equally familiar in other Cornish texts.

Moreover, the situation as regards simple pronouns affixed to verbs or prepositional pronouns tends to back this up. The only occurrence of *vy* is found in the example *Symon mab Joannes, esta ge worth ow cara vy* and elsewhere the form *ve* is commonplace. Indeed, Christ repeats four times in the more common spelling *esta (ge) worth ow cara ve*, on the same page of the ninth homily.⁴⁰ In the second person, the forms **sy* and **gy* are not found, but *kepar dell esta se..* is found once and *ge* is the common form.⁴¹

In all other persons, the simple affixed pronouns share the same form as the independent pronouns, although the word boundaries are sometimes wrongly fixed, e.g. *nagony mas dore* and *kepar dell rongy the oll scripturs erall*.⁴² In the third person singular, the masculine appears most often as *eff* but also as *ef*, this latter being conversely more common in the thirteenth homily. There is apparently no link between position and spelling. In the feminine, there is only the form *hy*, found only ten times.⁴³

The only form of the first person plural is *ny* except in the one example *Agan Saviour ne Jhesu...* in the sixth homily.⁴⁴ An identical form *ne* meaning “not” occurs elsewhere, notably case such as *Rag ny ne gon abyll...* where the pronoun occurs in a

⁴⁰ T 43.11, 43.8, 43.14.

⁴¹ T 48.16.

⁴² T 6.18, 18.13-14.

⁴³ T 3.22, 3a.9, 12a.16, 17a.9, 31.3, 31.8, 31.9, 32.5, 47a.21, 64.17.

⁴⁴ T 26a.1.

stressed position before the negative particle.⁴⁵ This may provide an alternative explanation to Williams' theory as regards the forms of the singular discussed above. He points out (wrongly, in the second instance) that "... **he*, **ne*, **whe* and **e* are unattested."⁴⁶ In fairness, the single example appears to be a mere whim of the translator found nowhere else, but the point remains that a difference in stress is a far more likely cause. This, in turn, implies that unstressed vowels may be susceptible to lowering, a point which is discussed below. It is a better use of the corroborating evidence than to posit an unnecessary and rather inexplicable development of two forms of the same pronoun in both the first and second persons singular, but no such development in the other persons.

The form *whi* is a single variant of the usual *why* and the forms *I* and *y* are orthographical variants depending on the capitalisation (except one case of *Y* in the seventh homily).⁴⁷ The forms of the third person plural affixed pronouns are written more often undivided from the preceding verb than are the other pronouns, although this does occur in all persons after verbs and prepositional pronouns.

Another class of affixed pronouns exist in Cornish, their functions overlapping the first in some cases. (It should be noted that this effect is not as pronounced as in other texts, both earlier and later.) These are compounded with common verbs such as *bos* "to be", *dos* "to come" and *mos* "to go" to a varying extent in Middle Cornish, but in the homilies they are restricted almost entirely to *bos*. Forms only exist for the singular persons, the simple affixed pronouns otherwise taking their place or none used at all.

⁴⁵ T 10a.1.

⁴⁶ Williams, *op.cit.*, § 18.2.

⁴⁷ T 1a.20 "whi", T 31a.7 "Y".

There are no examples in the homilies of the first person singular ending *-ma* compounded to finite verbs, as occur in other texts.

The greatest variation in form is in the present tense of *bos*, partly because there are two separate forms of the present tense in Cornish. The longer form is used either in a locative sense or with a present participle construction, whereas the standard short form is used with a noun, adjective or past participle complement. The longer form only occurs with the compounded pronoun in the second person singular, every example with a present participle construction.

Arluth esta ge ow Jugia... [7.15]

esta (ge) worth ow cara ve... [43.8, 43.14, 43.15]

esta ge worth ow cara vy [43.11]

kepar dell esta se falsly ow reportia [48.16-17]

mar sesta worth y wull Rag kerensa an dus [48.22-23]

an pith esta ow supposia the brogath an la. [48.23-48a.1]

In each case, the full form *esos* has been contracted as a result of adding the compounded pronoun; in four, the simple affixed pronoun then follows. To this may be compared the uncontracted form without compounded pronoun in the following examples:-

hag y thesos ow allowa an pith ew da [14a.4]

ha y thesas ow tristya fatell ota gydyar... [14a.4-5]

There are two examples of the short form of *bos* with the compounded pronoun in the second person singular of the present tense, the first continuing from the last given:-

... *fatell ota gydyar then re ew dall...* [14a.5]

benegas ostage, Symon mab Joanna [44.2-3]

The normal short form *os* occurs elsewhere, for example *hag y thos dyskys in la* on the same page as the above three.⁴⁸ However, the compounded pronoun ending *-ta* occurs in one other surprising example in the present tense. To render Harpesfeld's parenthetical "I praye the", Tregear substitutes the phrase *a supposta* meaning "do you suppose". Considering that the compounded pronoun is not employed with other verbs in the manuscript, not even common auxiliaries (except the verb "to be"), this seems like an odd insertion that may represent a more colloquial register.

The normal form of the third person compounded pronoun *-va* does not occur in the short present tense, instead replaced by *-a* attached to the verb from *ew* (or *yw*) as *ewa*. This has also been understood as simply a form of the simple pronoun *eff* with the final consonant lost and the vowel lowered, but this does not seem in keeping with the widespread retention of the form *eff* in all positions elsewhere. It is certainly a compounded pronoun and the difference in form is probably best explained by the assimilation of the consonant /v/ to the labial of *ew* compounded before it.

Rag henna y thewa poynt bras a error... [12a.19]

ow supposia fatell ewa warbyn reason [23a.20]

There are ten examples in the short imperfect tense of *bos*, eight in the present subjunctive, two in the imperfect subjunctive and five in the preterite, as well as one single example in the present-future of *dos* “to come”. An example is given here of each, in the order given above.

... ha pan ova kyllys ny vynna an corfe abeya an ena [4.6-7]

Penagull a rella receva anotha ha na vova worthy... [51a.8-9]

... beva foode an corfe po food an ena... [57a.3]

Whath kynfeva lyas tyrmyn assays ha teball pynchis... [34.5-6]

... mar teva ha folya henna in y conuersacion. [20.10]

In these examples, it appears that the compounded affixed pronoun has little meaning except to reinforce the verbal ending. The subsequent addition of simple affixed pronouns seems to uphold this view. In examples such as *esta ge worth ow cara ve*, the form *-ta* seems to have become almost an integral part of the verb. Since there are examples with no compounded pronoun, it may be that the text represents a transitional period where the lack of the pronoun was a higher register; the purpose of adding it may have been to increase the distinction between over-similar personal forms. In any case, the

⁴⁸ T 14a.3-4.

view that these compounded pronouns do not represent any additional stress in the sentence seems to be correct.⁴⁹

The use of possessive pronouns in the manuscript does not differ greatly from that of earlier texts. The forms and following mutations are the same (although mutations are occasionally absent): the second examples here illustrate the pronoun elided with a preceding preposition; in each case except the feminine third person singular, the last example given shows a reinforcing suffixed pronoun.

ow thas [9a.20] *haw thas a neff* [23a.10] *ow thas ve* [44.4]
the arluth Du [20a.7] *theth vab* [9a.21] *the sight ge* [10a.9]
y vam [39a.17] *thy das* [9a.19] *y vnvab eff* [11a.1]
y hoth[3a.10]
agyn arluth [59.12] *thegan heveleb ny* [1a.17] *agan arluth ny* [1.7]
in agis colonow [26.2] *thegys exortya why* [5.13]
aga thytyll [6a.13] *haga drog bewnans* [6a.9] *aga eyth y* [19.18]

In the case of the feminine third person singular, there are no other examples in the text: indeed, this example is an insertion by Tregear of uncertain meaning in the context, probably “her fall”. Unlike in other texts, the preposition *in* or *yn* “in” is not elided, although *the* “to” and *ha* “and” are always elided with a following possessive pronoun.

The use of infixed pronouns is undiminished in the homilies, both with and without the reinforcing suffixed pronoun. Much use is made of alternative syntax, notably using

⁴⁹ Williams, *op.cit.*, § 19.2-10.

the auxiliary verb *gul* “to do”, which does not require an infix. However, infixed pronouns are the norm; the only example found so far which omits an expected infix is *Ea, arluth, te a wore henna, fatell caraff ve ge*.⁵⁰ Only the second person singular infixed pronoun is not found anywhere in the homilies.

eff am clow ve [41a.16]

mas eff an gruge [2.7]

han venyn an tas as grug perfect [2a.6]

eff an gafas ny [40.19]

me agis pys panadra ew hemma? [59.8] *me as dynvyn why* [35a.22]

mas pub vr eff as cara y [23.4]

A surprising absence is the full infixed pronoun *-gan* in the first person plural, occurring nowhere in the text. The shorter form *-n* is very frequent, however. Similarly, both the long form *-gas* and short form *-s* of the second person plural infix are found frequently. Confusion with the third person is avoided by the use of a reinforcing pronoun. This is more common than the infix alone, unless the subject precedes or is otherwise clear enough to need no clarification, as in the second and third examples above.

⁵⁰ T 43.9.

ii) Verb forms and frequency

One particularly striking feature of the Tregear manuscript is the verbal forms which occur in it. Upon reading the text for the first time, one might be forgiven for thinking that its macaronic character left little space for either the structure or the vocabulary of Cornish. Indeed, the verbal syntax has profoundly detrimental effects upon the translation; in many cases the English verb is merely given a superficially Cornish form and is often followed by the equivalent preposition to that expected in English. Nance cited the example *Du an furmyas han shappyas in mes an nore*, but from among thousands of examples could be added *an nore a thros in rag bestes peswar trosek* or *eff a vyn an bobill the folya aga lessons*.⁵¹

However, from a morphological point of view, neither the macaronic syntax nor the vocabulary are necessarily good indicators of whether the structure of the language had been changed by the impact of English. Even the last example, which is an ungrammatical calque of the original syntax, is representative of perfectly standard Cornish morphology. The principal impact of any abnormalities of syntax is the effects upon the frequency of attested forms, which may not have reflected the normal use of the language.

The natural way to begin a description of the verbal forms found in the homilies is with the verb-noun. Of course, a normal range of Cornish verb-nouns are found in the homilies, for example *leverall*, *ry*, *gull*, *merwall*, *naha* and *cafus*.⁵² Partly as a result of the wholesale Cornicising of verbs from English, the verb-noun is by far the most common

⁵¹ Nance, *Old Cornwall*, Vol. 1 (1951), p.23. T 2.3-4, 2.7-8, 34.14.

⁵² T 1.6, 1.2, 45.1, 2.22, 3.11, 52a.4.

form found. The effects of this upon syntax are worth considering here, since the use and frequency of auxiliary verbs must necessarily be affected. Williams suggests that the present-future had been restricted largely to future sentences by the time of “Tudor Cornish”, instead replaced in the present by the periphrastic use of the verb *bos* “to be” with the particle *ow* and verb-noun in present participle construction.⁵³ The text is replete with examples such as these:-

yma an profet dauid ow allegia helma... [1.3-4]

e ma Chrisostom ow scryfa than philipians... [66.7-8]

Rag nyn gesan ny ow cara Du mar ver... [9a.5]

ny ew an devas vs ow mos in stray [10a.2-3]

Although this present tense construction is indeed more common in the homilies than might be expected by comparison with earlier texts, it is worth remembering that the syntax of the homilies is distorted by the nature of the translation from the English original. Even so, Williams’ explanation ignores several other reasons why the periphrastic construction might be expected to be more common in the homilies.

In the first instance, the examples above represent a large proportion of cases that cite holy authors. The meaning of the second example is not simply a statement that “Chrisostom writes [often]” in either a general or habitual sense; if that were so, one would expect this to be the form of the simple present tense. Neither does it mean “Chrisostom is writing [now]” in the normal sense of the continuous present. This

⁵³ Williams, *op.cit.*, § 21.7.

distinction between the tenses is absolutely clear; moreover, exactly the same distinction exists in Breton, rendered here word for word:-

emañ Chrisostom o skrivañ d'ar philipians... [now]

Chrisostom a skriv d'ar philipians... [regularly]

There is a good reason why **Chrisostom a scryf than philipians* is not the form here. The use of the present tense is intended to impart immediacy to the statement, because the words of Chrisostom were, and are, available to hand at any moment. It is a description of the holy author's words, so it is not surprising that the verb *bos* "to be" is chosen. Since the complement is a present participle, the long form is required, giving the same construction as the form of the continuous present tense.

This does not account for all examples of this construction, although it should be noted that very few inflected forms of the Cornicised verbs are found in the text. The verb-nouns are formed by adding the suffix *-ya*, *-ia* or *-a* to the perceived stem of the verb, e.g. *optaynya* [13a.14], *prevaylya* [34.6], *dihonora* [61.12]. In the present tense, the third person singular should be the most common form in "abnormal" word-order, the same as the stem - usually the bare English form - of the verb. One might expect from *talkya* [55.9] a sentence like **Eff a talk then bobill*. Perhaps it is the inappropriate habitual or general sense of the simple present tense which explains why this is avoided. However, it is not avoided in the case of Cornish verbs, e.g. *me a lever theso ge* [44.4]. No example of the inflected present in the third person singular can be found among the Cornicised verbs. Either they were avoided because they sounded too English or else they sounded

unwieldy. A form **percef* from *percevia* [60a.3] demonstrates why perhaps an alternative construction was sought.

The continuous present is not the only means by which awkward inflected forms of borrowed English verbs are avoided. At least as many of the numerous cases are found in constructions with *gul* “to do”:-

whath ny rowns y inta vnderstondia... [17a.16-17]

ha te a wore fatell ra ve the cara. [43.16]

ha honna ny ra agys desevia [32.2]

The second example has a Cornish verb-noun and can be compared to *te a wore... fatell caraff ve ge* [43.9-10] a few lines earlier. It can be seen from this that both methods are normal, but the first method is exploited when inflected forms of English verbs would be awkward. This and the continuous present tense are the major contributors to the overwhelming number of verb-nouns instead of inflected forms. Even so, examples of the inflected present tense are not missing from the homilies:-

ef a deffe in ban kepar ha flowren [7.14]

So pew a leverough why... [43a.22-23]

Pan dra lever an den auncient [36a.24]

an forme a bara ha gwyn, an pith a welyn [58a.8]

In vn dith, rag may hallans mos the crist warbarth [47.15-16]

ny vanna ve na moy agys gylwell why servantes [35a.19]

Mar ten ny ha leverell nag ony pehadoryan [8.15-16]

An egglos a rome... nyn sevas custom vith an parna [49.24]

Although the preterite is commonly constructed with parts of *gul* “to do” in the homilies in the same way as in the present tense, a variety of inflected forms occur. The majority, in all tenses, are in the third person singular due to the “abnormal” word-order. In this tense alone, a few inflected forms of verbs borrowed from the English original are found in the third person singular, for example *walkias* and Nance’s examples *furmyas* and *shappyas* above, but are not common.⁵⁴ None of these inflected verbs can compete, however, with the frequency of the first method.

rag ny ny russyn gull agan honyn [1.7-8]

praga a ruke an egglos dewys... [64.5]

ny rug den vith govyn pew a rug hemma na henna [57.2-3]

fatell russens dysobaya aga gwrear [12.4-5]

... hag eff a thebbras [3a.10]

hy a dowlas in offering a Dew moy agis y oll [64.17]

(an) dishonor han disordyr a wylsyn ny [39.20]

In della eff a eth thy virmans heb gull travith... [23.14]

ha ny an Jeva promes a brassa royow... [28.12]

By comparison with other tenses, the imperfect and conditional are infrequent, except in the case of *bos* “to be”. The inflected forms are largely represented in the third person and the first person plural. The few forms found in the homilies are fairly standard; it is interesting, however, that the imperfect is also used as a conditional in the first example. It seems as though the fifth example is a mistake for the pluperfect, used correctly in the eighth and tenth examples as a subjunctive. Otherwise, the imperfect of verbs other than *bos* expresses the habitual and the pluperfect acts as a conditional. There is no example of the particle *re* preceding the pluperfect, as in other texts, to distinguish it from the conditional usage.

mar mynna pedyr ry power thotheff [46a..2]

ha y a re bostya hag a leuery [33.3-4]

an pith a wyllyn ny in very deda [50.21]

In kynsoll eff a gara du y das vgh pub tra [22a.12-13]

may hallans contynewa in dadder [25.5]

mar perfect dell vea res thyn [9a.7-8]

Surely, ny vynsan cresy an aweyll... [37a.10]

tus a russa supposia mar teffa du aga suffra... [13a.10-11]

rag eff a alsa creatya ha gull mab den hebtha [1.21-22]

dretha may alsans bewa ha plesya du [40.14]

⁵⁴ T 2.4, 2.4, 64a.26.

The present and past subjunctive are not easy to distinguish in the homilies, except in the verb *bos* “to be”. This is because unstressed final syllables appear to have fallen together, removing the difference between forms like *gallo* and *galla* found in earlier texts.⁵⁵ Although this affects the third person and the plural, the evidence for the first and second persons singular rests on just a few attested forms.

The verb *gul* “to do” is most frequently found in the subjunctive, since it is used as an auxiliary in the subjunctive as in the other tenses. Most cases in the plural are prohibitions and therefore necessarily in the present subjunctive: the first person occurs as both *rellen* and *rellan*; the second is *rellogh*, *relogh*, *reallowgh*, *reallow* (*why*); the third person appears as either *rellens* or *rellans*.⁵⁶ The third person singular form for both present and past is *rella* and occurs very frequently; only three occurrences of the second person singular *rylly* have the distinctive form of the present subjunctive.⁵⁷

The subjunctive of *gallos* “to be able” is also very frequent: here again there is no distinction in spelling between the past and present in the third person and the plural. The plural forms are: *hallan* (1.pl.); *hallogh*, *hallowgh*, *hallow why* (2.pl.); *allans*, *hallans* (3.pl.).⁵⁸ The third person singular occurs as *halla*, *alla* and a contracted form *malla* < *may halla*.⁵⁹ No form of the first or second persons singular is found.

Another verb which occurs frequently in the subjunctive is *dos* “to come”: there is no distinction in spelling between the two subjunctives in the third person or plural. The

⁵⁵ Williams, *op.cit.*, § 19.6.

⁵⁶ T 57a.11, 27.11 (1.pl.); 38a.13, 38a.14, 3a.1, 44a.2 (2.pl.); 51a.6, 19.13 (3.pl.).

⁵⁷ T 41a.10 (3.s.); 44.7, 44.8, 44.15 (2.s.).

⁵⁸ T 30a.13 (1.pl.); 1a.1, 30a.11, 22.4 (2.pl.); 19a.1, 25.5 (3.pl.).

⁵⁹ T 7a.18, 1.20, 60a.23.

forms of the plural are: *deffan*, *theffan*, *teffan*, *teffen* (1.pl.); *teffens* (3.pl.).⁶⁰ The third person singular occurs as *deffa*, *theffa* and *teffa*.⁶¹ The second person singular of the present subjunctive appears once only as *tyffy* but no contrasting form of the past is found.⁶²

Other forms of the subjunctive are found in a number of verbs. Only the form *nan geffo* “may not have” has the distinctive form of the present subjunctive; although the other occurrences of *an geffa* and *an Jeffa* show the lowered or indistinct unstressed vowel, so the isolated case may be a mere scribal variation.⁶³ Three forms of present subjunctive in the the third person singular occur: *lavarra* “may say”, *throlla* “may bring”, *garra* “may love”; another form *vynna* “may wish”/“might” occurs in both the present and the imperfect subjunctive.⁶⁴ Finally, a form *wothow* “you may know” occurs in the second person plural of the present subjunctive.⁶⁵ These provide further evidence that the unstressed syllables were no longer distinguished and the two subjunctives fell together in most persons.

Only *bos* “to be” has distinctive forms of the two subjunctives outside the first and second persons singular. The reason for this is that the monosyllabic form was always stressed and thus never lost the distinction of vowel quality. The homilies only provide examples of the third person singular *bo*, *bova* (present) and *be* (imperfect); the first

⁶⁰ T 51a.10, 66.20, 6a.14, 24.6 (1.pl.); 35a.9 (3.pl.).

⁶¹ T 7.3, 41a.5, 13a.9.

⁶² T 6.15.

⁶³ T 20.15, 4a.1 & 21a.12, 25.4.

⁶⁴ T 17a.1, 37a.1, 21a.4; 19.3 “vynna” (pres.subj.); 20.3 “vynna” (imperf.subj.).

⁶⁵ T 18.4.

person plural *bon* (present), *ben* (imperfect); and the third person plural *bons*.⁶⁶ Although it may seem incongruous that separate subjunctives continued to exist in the verb “to be” and apparently in the first and second persons singular of other verbs (although the former is not attested here), while falling together elsewhere, the manuscript uses inflected verbs broadly according to the usage of earlier texts. It is not clear whether some parts of the subjunctive had fallen together or whether they are represented as such by the orthography here, but the former seems likely.

Imperatives are found in the homilies in the second person singular and plural, as well as the occasional first person plural form. Although the formula “Let us...” from the English is translated literally in some instances in the Cornish version, for example *gesowgh ny the gafus recourse then tryssa chapter a genesis* “Let us have recourse to the third chapter of Genesis”, a number of first person imperatives such as *Gesyn ny* and *gwren ny* are also found.⁶⁷ Usually these are in the plural, though there are also examples like *gas ny* “let us” in the singular; plural examples include *merkyow* “mark”, *gregh* “do”, *egerogh y* “open them”, *merow* “see”, *bethow* “be” and *na rewgh* “do not”.⁶⁸ It is interesting that some of the plural examples have lost the final <gh>, which may have been either silent or not heavily aspirated.

More individual to the homilies is the heavy use of past participles, not normally as frequent in Cornish manuscripts. The reason for this is that the language of the exemplar, English, is characterised by a relatively frequent use of participles. Although inflected forms of verbs borrowed from English is avoided in the homilies, this is not the case as

⁶⁶ This is a simplified paradigm due to the variety of word divisions and mutations. The most straightforward example of each is found at T 8a.15, 21.17, 37.7, 3a.13, 40a.17.

⁶⁷ T 3.20 (an insert does not occur in Harpesfeld’s text), 4.13, 5a.3.

regards the verbal adjective or past participle, forms such as *endewys*, *declarys* and even *signifies* being very common, especially in the earlier part of the text.⁶⁹ No autonomous forms of the verb occur, replaced by such English passive syntax as *y thew scriffes in second chapter in Genesis* being borrowed directly from the exemplar.⁷⁰ The usual suffix -ys or -is is added to the perceived “stem” of the English verb; *inflammyes* and *geses* are slight variations on this.⁷¹ It might be added that a consequence of this heavy use of participles is that a large number belonging to genuine Cornish verbs are also found in the text.

The relative clause is a feature of some interest in the manuscript because it shows a morphological innovation in Middle Cornish not seen in earlier manuscripts. If the present or imperfect tense of *bos* “to be” is the verb in a relative clause, the sentence is restructured so that the verb-noun *bos* replaces the verb and heads the sentence as in the first example below. Where there is no noun subject in the clause, possessive pronouns are used with the verb-noun to specify the subject, as in the second example below:-

cris a res in pub poynt oll bos havall thy bredereth [13.6]

ha dre reson y vosa mar sure in feith, an egglos a ve buldys... [45a.13]

However, in the Tregear manuscript (including the last homily), the normal range of possessive pronouns has been abandoned and what was originally the masculine possessive pronoun appears to have been interpreted as a particle: it almost always

⁶⁸ T 1.25, 1a.1, 16.8, 16.9, 18.17, 18.16, 16a.9.

⁶⁹ T 1a.10, 1.13, 1a.18.

⁷⁰ T 2.11.

precedes *bos* in these constructions and the expected mutation only occurs in the second example and three others. In order to convey the subject of the relative clause, then, another strategy is adopted. The compounded affixed pronouns described above, or in two cases a simple affixed pronoun, are added to the verb-noun.

pew a leverough {why y bosama}{Why ow bos ve?} [43a.22-44.1]

A te dore, remember y bosta, dore, dore. [7a.1]

why a yll inta vnderstondia y bosa lell [36.10]

rag e vos eff keveris Dew ha deane. [60a.9]

honna a rug... desquethas y bossy an very spowse... [34a.15-16]

dre reson y bosen gyllys in mes thean chy a thu [40a.21]

dre reson y bosow gwarnys theragdorne [18.14-15]

dre reson y bosans y ow pretendya an gyrryow a thu [19a.14-15]

The first example effectively shows both the simple affixed pronoun and the compounded affixed pronoun, since the catchwords at the end of the page are re-worked in a slightly different form on the next. The last example is also interesting because a verbal ending is added in order to distinguish the plural from the feminine form of the fifth example. The system appears to be rather cobbled together and in transition between the use of possessive pronouns and an evolving set of new personal endings.

⁷¹ T 3.6, 1.21.

iii) Conjugated Prepositions

The range of conjugated prepositions (or prepositional pronouns) that are found in the manuscript is greater than could be expected from the effects of mere orthographical variation. In certain persons and prepositions, neither the stressed nor unstressed vowels are consistent; furthermore, the loss of a qualitative distinction between final unstressed vowels has caused the third person masculine and plural forms to fall together and new forms to emerge in order to distinguish the persons.

Only a few forms of the first and second person singular are found in the texts at all, in which the effects described above are less pronounced but probably still in evidence in the last of the examples given below:-

<i>gans</i> “with” [1.2]	<i>genas ge</i> [31a.20]	“with thee”
<i>in</i> “in” [2.16]	<i>inno ve</i> [11.3], <i>innove</i> [11a.9], <i>inna ve</i> [39a.6]	“in me”
<i>the</i> “to” [1.2]	<i>thymmo ve</i> [12a.21], <i>thym</i> [21a.6] <i>theso ge</i> [10.1], <i>this</i> [18a.14]	“to me” “to thee”
<i>theworth</i> “from” [4.18]	<i>the wortha ve</i> [22a.18]	“from me”
<i>worth</i> “against” [43a.1]	<i>wartha ve</i> [35a.14]	“against me”

A number of forms are written with <o> in the unstressed syllable; in fact, probably the affixed pronoun took the stress in most cases. In the case of *inna ve*, the <o> form has been apparently reduced to schwa, as has a different vowel in

wartha ve < **worthyf* vy and *the wortha ve* < **theworthyf* vy. With normal variation of the graph for /i:/, the forms *thym* and *this* are standard, exceptional forms of *the* found in all texts. A similar situation is found in the first and second person plural:-

a “of, from” [1.8]	<i>ahanan</i> [7a.23], <i>ahanan ny</i> [15.2],	
	<i>a hanan</i> [10.11], <i>a hanan ny</i> [29a.3]	“of us”
	<i>ahanowhy</i> [11a.8], <i>a hanowgh</i> [3.18],	
	<i>a hanow why</i> [11.4],	
	<i>a hanowgh why</i> [22.2]	“of you”
dre “by, through” [1.22]	<i>drethan</i> [10.15]	“by us”
	<i>dretho why</i> [14a.11]	“by you”
gans “with”	<i>genan ny</i> [30.13]	“with us”
	<i>genowgh</i> [17.13], <i>genowhy</i> [36.15],	
	<i>genogh</i> [36a.6]	“with you”
in “in”	<i>innow why</i> [39a.7]	“in you”
rag “for” [1.7]	<i>ragan ny</i> [1a.2], <i>ragan</i> [1a.4]	“for us”
	<i>ragow why</i> [52.3]	“for you”
the “to”	<i>thin</i> [53a.9], <i>thyn</i> [3.6],	
	<i>thyny</i> [57.10], <i>thynny</i> [5.6],	
	<i>thyn ny</i> [1a.14], <i>then</i> [64a.27],	
	<i>theny</i> [60.9], <i>thenny</i> [11a.4]	“to us”
	<i>theugh</i> [60a.2], <i>thewgh</i> [47a.14],	
	<i>thewgh why</i> [27.7], <i>thewhy</i> [3a.1]	“to you”

<i>therag, derog</i> “before” [8.5, 62a.11]	<i>deragen</i> [60a.1]	“before you”
<i>the worth</i> “from”	<i>the worthan</i> [16.14]	
	<i>theworthan ny</i> [24a.8]	
	<i>the worthan ny</i> [30.12]	“from us”
<i>war</i> “on” [2.15]	<i>warnan ny</i> [40a.18]	“on us”
<i>worth</i> “against”	<i>worthan ny</i> [15a.8-9]	“against us”
	<i>worthow why</i> [35a.13],	
	<i>worthow</i> [38.17]	“against you”

Apart from the normal forms of *the*, the second person always shows the graph <o> regardless of whether the labial, affricate or affixed pronoun is written, certainly representing the phonetic situation. The first person is otherwise written with <a> for schwa in all cases except *deragen*, in the final homily, where it is written <e>. Compared with this fairly consistent model, the third person singular is much more variable.

<i>a</i> “of, from”	<i>anotho eff</i> [23.2], <i>anotheff</i> [11.1],	
	<i>a netha</i> [36.6], <i>anetha</i> [53.9]	“of him”
	<i>anethy</i> [17a.13], <i>anethe hy</i> [12a.16],	
	<i>anythy</i> [3a.6]	“of her”
	<i>anetha</i> [6a.12], <i>anotha</i> [6a.7],	
	<i>anethy</i> [12a.13], <i>anetha y</i> [53.18]	“of them”
<i>dre</i> “by, through”	<i>dretha</i> [31.16], <i>dretha eff</i> [52.5],	

	<i>dretho eff</i> [8a.15]	“by him”
	<i>dretha</i> [40.14]	“by them”
<i>gans</i> “with”	<i>ganso</i> [8a.4], <i>gonsa</i> [14a.11], <i>gansa eff</i> [21a.2], <i>ganso eff</i> [8a.4]	“with him”
	<i>gynsy</i> [3a.4]	“with her”
	<i>gansa</i> [2a.7], <i>gansans y</i> [22a.6]	“with them”
<i>heb</i> “without” [2a.9]	<i>hebtha</i> [1.22]	“without him”
<i>in</i> “in”	<i>inna</i> [2a.13], <i>in eff</i> [11.14], <i>ylna</i> [2a.15]	“in him”
	<i>ynhy</i> [11a.12]	“in her”
	<i>inna</i> [16.10], <i>innans</i> [38a.20], <i>ylna</i> [48.3], <i>ylnans y</i> [6a.12]	“in them”
<i>rag</i> “for”	<i>ragtha</i> [28a.7]	“for him”
	<i>ragtha</i> [22a.12], <i>ragthans</i> [23.11]	
	<i>ragthans y</i> [23.6]	“for them”
<i>theworth</i> “from”	<i>theworto</i> [3a.13], <i>theworth eff</i> [15.3], <i>theworta</i> [4a.16]	“from him”
	<i>theworty</i> [30a.22]	“from her”
	<i>theworta</i> [44.19], <i>the wortans y</i> [23.4]	“from them”
<i>war</i> “on”	<i>warnotho</i> [62.43], <i>warnotha</i> [4.18]	“on him”

	<i>warnetha</i> [2.21]	“on them”
<i>worth</i> “against”	<i>worto</i> [29.13], <i>worta</i> [2.2]	“against him”

By far the worst area of confusion is between the masculine and the plural forms. It appears that [o] originally occurred in all final positions in the masculine, but the lack of stress upon these vowels made the form indistinguishable from the plural. This led to more confusion about the preceding vowel, probably also [o] in the masculine and [e] in the plural. By the time of the homilies, both forms occur for either person.

The addition of the enclitic pronoun *eff* or *y* solved this problem, sometimes being absorbed in cases like *anotheff* and, rarely, dispensing with the need to conjugate the preposition in cases like *theworth eff* and *in eff*. However, the first tactic has led to a plural form *anethy* no different from the feminine form. A final tactic was to add the verbal ending *-ans*, although the implementation of this in the homilies is inconsistent and confusion remains. In the preposition *gans*, the confusion of vowels has led to metathesis, giving *gonsa* for *ganso*. It is probable that the loss of quality of vowels was not uniform, since an imperfect awareness is shown of the old distinctions. This could be ascribed to orthographic conservatism, but the homilies do not display a noticeable unwillingness towards new forms. A better explanation is that the homilies represent a period in which the pronominal and inflectional system as a whole was in flux, triggered by phonetic changes which left insufficient phonetic distinctions in the old system.

5) Phonological features

The fact that unstressed vowels often lost their quality in the Cornish of the time of the homilies, demonstrated in the orthography throughout the text, has been sufficiently addressed in the above discussions of the simple affixed pronouns, the subjunctive and prepositional pronouns. The same effect may be observed in nouns; and it is enough to cite some examples such as *nownsag*, *lowar*, *leverall* and *dallath* here.⁷² It is not a unique feature of the homilies that the graphs <y>, <i> and <e> are found in apparent free variation in many words (see above) and elsewhere other vowels are somewhat interchangeable in unstressed positions. As well as <a> (normally the vowel chosen in final position), the schwa vowel is represented by <e> in words like *thegen* and *erell*, <y> in *bobyll* and rarely even <i> in the variant example *bobill*.⁷³ It is nonetheless a far more widespread feature than in earlier texts and must represent a transitional stage in the vocalic system.

One could reasonably speculate from this that Old Cornish might have possessed a vocalic system more similar to Welsh and that throughout Middle Cornish a gradual process occurred in which it came to resemble the more lax English vocalic system more closely.⁷⁴ Perhaps the close of this of this process signalled the end of Middle Cornish, the homilies dating from perhaps only fifty years or less before one might place an artificial dividing line and describe the beginning of Late Cornish. The dating is convenient largely because there is a time gap between the Tregear manuscript and the records of Late Cornish. The imperfect nature of those sources, largely compiled by antiquarians who

⁷² T 1.1, 1a.11, 66.5, 13a.9.

⁷³ T 1a.18, 52a.8, 1.2, 1.16.

⁷⁴ Williams also holds this opinion, although his reasons are different, *op.cit.*, § 12.3.

were not native speakers, compounds the apparent effect of this. However, until material is discovered which may bridge the temporal divide, this must remain speculation.

Another related effect may be the confusion of the diphthongs /ew/ and /ow/. This does not occur in cases like *ew* “is” where lowering has already occurred from a form like **yw*. However, the verbal adjective of *cows* “to speak” occurs as *kewses* and *kowses* in succeeding lines; all second person imperatives of more than one syllable show /ow/ rather than /ew/ if the spelling is an accurate guide, e.g. *Gesow*, *Merkyow*.⁷⁵

The loss of vowel quality in unstressed syllables, however, does not seem to have any effect on stressed syllables, where the alternation between spellings in <e> and <y> (or <i>) found in earlier texts seems to continue. A possible explanation of words like *gyrryow*, *symblans* and *lyuerys*, is that the vowel may be a short /e/ rather than there being a hypothetical alternation between long and short syllables of /e:/ with /ɛ/.⁷⁶ This /e/, in turn, is closest in articulation to the phoneme /I/. Since the graph <e> might have been perceived to best represent /ɛ/ in short syllables, <y> may have seemed the best choice. Of course, there is much vacillation between the two, *leverys* and *gerryow* also occurring for the above.⁷⁷

Nevertheless, it is clear - and so far insufficiently explained - that <y> and <e> appear in apparent free variation in certain words from the earliest Middle Cornish onwards. Unless a process of raising vowels was occurring in stressed syllables at the same time as lowering in unstressed syllables, the above hypothesis seems to be the only one available. Since the feature is not unique to the Tregear manuscript and is known

⁷⁵ T 1.16, 1.17, 1a.1, 1a.1.

⁷⁶ T 52.5, 1a.7, 1a.18

earlier, any more convincing explanation would need to be based in a more extensive study of the orthography and vocalic system of Middle Cornish than is possible here.

From the very earliest period, Cornish shows a characteristic feature which does not occur in the other two Brythonic languages. Assibilation is seen even in *The Old Cornish Vocabulary* and the completion of the feature was already old in Middle Cornish: this is the the reason why it Cornish has *tas* “father” rather than keeping the older *tad* like Welsh. However, Middle Cornish displays a subsequent change whereby the same consonants, now /z/ (or perhaps /s/ if devoiced), became spelt as either <g> or <j>. The precise causes and extent of this change, known as palatalisation, have been the subject of some dispute between Ken George and Nicholas Williams.⁷⁸

In any case, the Tregear manuscript displays this sound-change, although it is not particularly consistent in this. It has already been noted above that the pronoun *se* “thee” occurs far less often than *ge* in the manuscript. Another word which occurs more often with palatalisation than without is *vgy* “is”, although the form *vsy* also occurs.⁷⁹ Although it is displayed sporadically in words such as *cowgys* and *blonogeth*, it is not common except in forms of the verb *bos* “to be”.⁸⁰ These, however, account for perhaps a third of affected forms, including *engy*, *ne gon*, *nyn gesan*, *nyn go*, *vongy* and *ny gesas*.⁸¹ The first example is the third person plural ending; the others show incorrect word division where the last consonant of **nyng* < *nyns* has been written as part of the verb. In some cases, the <n> has been uniquely lost in the process.

⁷⁷ T 1.14, 1a.18.

⁷⁸ Williams, *op.cit.*, § 10.1-5.

⁷⁹ T 24.5, 23a.15.

⁸⁰ T 11.1, 1.12.

⁸¹ T 9a.3, 10a.1, 9a.5, 2a.14, 4.6, 14a.8.

However, palatalisation does not normally occur on either side of the same vowel simultaneously, shown in *nynsugy*, *nyn segow why* and *nyn sega*.⁸² An usual exception is *ny gugy*, possibly avoided in most cases for the sake of euphony.⁸³ Examples occur in other verbs, frequently *gul* “to do”, since this occurs throughout the text as an auxiliary: *rongy* and *ny rowng enioya* occur in the fourth homily.⁸⁴ The second of these is the only example of palatalisation in final position, apparently disallowed normally but explained here as being effectively intervocal due to a following word beginning with a vowel. (Since palatalisation is known in final position in Late Cornish, it seems that the effect later spread to other positions.)

The final common occurrence of palatalisation is in the verb comprising of forms of *bos* and dative infixed pronouns, used as “to have”. The masculine singular of this verb always has palatalisation after the infixed pronoun in Middle Cornish texts; in the homilies *nan geffo*, *an gevith* and *an Jeffa* are used as an occasional method to denote possession.⁸⁵ However, it does not seem to have been pointed out elsewhere that two forms occur, unlike in any other text, without palatalisation: *nyn sevas* and *nynsevith*.⁸⁶

The conclusion must be that palatalisation in the homilies is no more than an infrequent feature: possibly it was a lower register of speech. In any case, it is safe to assume that the sound change was by no means completed. Since it is known, in other languages (such as Irish), to be caused by the raising of vowels in its environment, a

⁸² T 16a.2, 16a.12, 2a.15.

⁸³ T 16.2.

⁸⁴ T 17a.16, 18.13.

⁸⁵ T 20.15, 57.19, 25.4.

⁸⁶ T 49.24, 40.7.

thorough study of the vocalic system of Middle Cornish must precede further study of the causes of palatalisation.

6) Tregear's Cornish

The language of the manuscript is often impenetrable because of the poor phraseology, idiom and syntax of the translation. Where English words are included, the sense is sometimes unclear and would certainly have eluded any speaker of Cornish without an advanced knowledge of English. It would seem that Tregear and his co-translators had little interest in whether the homilies were understood, although it was obviously important that the congregation understood that they were hearing Cornish! The English and Latin content were no doubt intended to impress and to deliver the impression of education. Indeed, some of the grammar is so bad that one might suspect that the homilies were translated in something of a rush. The short reign of Queen Mary set religious affairs in England on their head and no doubt this penetrated into the operations of the church in Cornwall.

It is not clear how many translators assisted Tregear, nor who was responsible for the thirteenth homily. Thomas Stephyn's identity and status may never be known, nor the extent of his contribution. Nonetheless, it cannot be doubted that all those responsible for the existing text were fluent speakers of Cornish - although their capability in English is less certain. As a result, it is a unique document of an important period of the Cornish language. The term Late Middle Cornish is chosen here mainly for convenience, since in fact Tregear's homilies were probably written in a transitional period between Middle and Late Cornish. Indeed, the value of those terms is unclear because so little of the Late

Cornish material was written by a native speaker. The Cornish of the early seventeenth century may have been much more similar to that of Tregear in the 1550s than to any extant manuscripts of the period.

There remain many linguistic areas of the manuscript that deserve more detailed attention than has been possible here. The scarcity of previous work on the homilies has been compounded by a poorly photocopied typescript edition and the impact of recent revivalist politics, as well as the difficult macaronic nature of the text. However, the historical phonology of Cornish needs to be addressed on a broader basis before any more detailed study of the Tregear manuscript may again be attempted.