

PSALOM

Pan-Orthodox Society for the Advancement of Liturgical Music

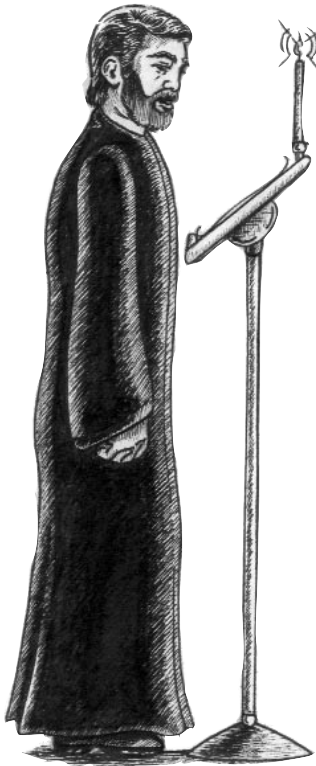
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Forms of Liturgical Song *Part I: Dialogue, Psalmody, and Hymnody*

by David Drillock



At the time of the conversion of the Russian nation to Christianity, the Byzantine liturgical development, for the most part, had been completed. The liturgical forms of prayer which called for the use of song in Orthodox liturgical services were very much the same as they are today, namely: dialogue, psalmody, and hymnody.

Dialogue: The Participation of All the People

A basic form of corporate Christian prayer is dialogue. Dialogue has occupied a central place in liturgical worship from the very beginning. Dialogue is basic to Christian prayer. In fact, the whole relationship of God with His people, from the time of the creation of man to the preaching of John the Baptist, and from the life, death, and Resurrection of Christ to the present day and hour can be described as a great dialogue between God and man. This dialogue has been initiated by God. One of the ways in which man responds to Him is in liturgical prayer—prayer in the form of thanksgiving, praise and supplication.

An example of dialogue in liturgical prayer is the litany. The word “litany” comes from the Greek word *lite*, which means “intercession.” In the liturgical services, there are a number of litanies: the Great Litany or Litany of Peace, the Augmented Litany, the Litany of Fervent



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The texts themselves of the various litanies clearly call for the active participation of those who have gathered for prayer. . . . The main reason that we come together in worship is to become one people in God and to make our common offering of thanksgiving to Him.

Supplication, the Evening Litany and the Morning Litany, all of which include invocations or petitions by the celebrant and a response by the people—i.e., a dialogue. In the Great Litany, the celebrant addresses the faithful and establishes an acceptable order of prayer. First he asks, “Let us pray to the Lord in peace,” the peace that is only possible because of the mediation of Christ, for it is in Him and through Him that we are able to pray with the certitude that our prayers will be heard and answered. The celebrant continues: “Let us pray for the salvation of our souls, for the peace of the whole world, for the union of all.” At the conclusion of each petition, the people respond, “Lord, have mercy,” i.e., Lord, be gracious to us and receive our prayers.¹

In the Augmented Litany the petitions are addressed to God Himself: “Have mercy on us, O God; according to Thy great goodness, we pray Thee, hear us and have mercy.” Here the petitions provide for specific requests for the immediate needs of the congregation and its individual members.

The texts themselves of the various litanies clearly call for the active participation of those who have gathered for prayer. The refrain “Lord have mercy” serves as the common response by all members in this community to the petitions of the celebrant leading the common prayer. The leader of the prayer begins with these words of invitation: “Let us pray to the Lord.” This invitation to prayer is not addressed just to a small group of chanters or a special choir assembled to speak on behalf of the faithful, but to each and every one of us who have gathered together to “pray to the Lord.”

The Anaphora is another example of the dialogue form. The Eucharistic Offering begins with a dialogue between the celebrant and the people. After summoning the people to stand with attentiveness and with fear, the priest blesses the people with the words: “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you,” to which the people respond: “And with your spirit.” The priest continues: “Let us lift up our hearts,” and the people respond: “We lift them up unto the Lord.” “Let us give thanks unto the Lord,” exclaims the celebrant, and the people give their agreement: “It is meet and right . . .”

The celebrant, presiding over the gathered community, then offers to God the prayer of thanksgiving of the faithful. This prayer expresses our total gratitude to God for all that He has done for

us in creating, saving, and glorifying the world, endowing us with the Kingdom which is to come. The faithful join with the angels who stand next to God, singing:

Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord of Sabaoth. Heaven and earth are full of your glory! Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

The singing of the angelic hymn is followed by the prayer of remembrance that includes the words of Jesus to His disciples: “Take, eat, this is My body . . . drink of it, all of you, this is My blood . . .”, to which the faithful signify their acceptance and agreement with the “Amen.” Then the celebrant offers the eucharistic gifts of the bread and wine to God: “Thine own of Thine own . . .” and the prayer of offering concludes with the singing of “We praise Thee, we bless Thee, we give thanks to Thee, and we pray to Thee, O our God.”

Again, what is most evident from the Anaphora text itself is that it has the same form as the Litany (i.e., dialogue), and it too implies communal participation—the prayer of the whole gathering. “Let us lift up our hearts.” “We lift them up unto the Lord.” “In peace let us pray to the Lord.” “We praise Thee, we bless Thee, we give thanks to Thee . . . and we pray to Thee.” The main reason that we come together in worship is to become one people in God and to make our common offering of thanksgiving to Him. As Paul Meyendorff has pointed out, the first person plural is always used in liturgical prayer in order to emphasize that liturgical prayer is the prayer of the entire community.² Indeed, this Greek word for worship—*leiturgia*—means a common or corporate action in which everyone takes an active part.

Psalmody: Alternating, Responsorial and Antiphonal

While biblical and liturgical scholars debate just how significant and extensive was the use of psalmody in the earliest Christian gatherings, it is well established that by the year 375, according to the testimony of St. Basil the Great, the chanting of psalms was prevalent throughout all the churches of the Christian East. The quotation often attributed to St. John Chrysostom, actually written in the form of a psalm with refrain, testifies to the popularity of the psalms in the life of a fourth-century Christian:

If the faithful are keeping vigil in the church,
David is first, middle, and last,
 If at dawn anyone wishes to sing hymns,
David is first, middle, and last,
 In the holy monasteries, among the ranks of
 the heavenly warriors,
David is first, middle, and last,
 In the convents of virgins, who are imitators
 of Mary,
David is first, middle, and last,
 In the deserts where men hold converse
 with God,
*David is first, middle, and last.*³

St. Basil, in his answer to the criticism of the Neocaesarean clergy against the psalmody practiced by his monks at vigils, describes the two different methods of chanting psalms that were used in his monastery. He writes:

They (the monks) divide themselves into two groups, and sing psalms in alternation with each other, at once intensifying their carefulness over the sacred texts, and focusing their attention and freeing their hearts from distraction. And then they entrust the lead of the chant to one person, while the rest sing the response.⁴

The first method mentioned by St. Basil is commonly referred to as *alternating psalmody*. Those present in the church are divided into two groups and sing psalms to each other, alternating psalm by psalm or verse by verse, taking care that the words of the sacred verses are clearly understood. The *kathisma* at our services today (“Blessed is the man,” for example) are often chanted in this manner.⁵

The most widespread method used for the chanting of psalms at this time, however, is *responsorial psalmody*, the second example noted by St. Basil. One person (a leading chanter) begins the chanting of the psalm verse, while all the others respond with a verse selected from the psalm itself. Such a practice was not only common at the time of St. Basil, but was a well-established traditional way of psalm singing, having its roots in the original poetic form and structure of many of the psalms themselves. An example of such a form is found in Psalm 135, where the second half of each verse of the psalm is exactly the same: “for His mercy endures forever.” Biblical scholars suggest that these psalms that include within themselves such

repetitive verses appear to have been composed for precisely the purpose of responsive recitation. Long before Basil, Christians were chanting selected psalms in this manner, as is witnessed by Tertullian, Eusebius, and others. Tertullian, for example, writes that those who are more exacting in their prayer are accustomed to add to their prayers an Alleluia and that sort of psalm in which those present respond with closing verses.⁶

The most common example of responsorial psalmody in our worship of today is the *prokeimenon*, a selected verse from a particular psalm that is first intoned by the soloist chanter in order to cue the people and establish the pitch. This common verse (or half-verse, or simply a final element of a verse) is then repeated by the people (choir). The chanter then begins to chant the psalm from the beginning, and after each verse or half-verse the people, forming one choir, chant the common response. As a conclusion, the soloist chanter sings the first half of the selected “response,” and the people conclude with the second half. The Prokeimenon of Great Vespers celebrated on Saturday evenings, taken from Psalm 92, is a good example of the responsorial form:

Soloist (deacon): The Lord is King; He is robed in majesty. (v. 1a)

Choir (people): The Lord is King; He is robed in majesty.

Soloist (deacon): The Lord is robed; He is girded with strength. (v. 1b)

Choir (people): The Lord is King; He is robed in majesty.

Soloist (deacon): For He has established the world; it shall not be moved. (v. 1c)

Choir (people): The Lord is King; He is robed in majesty.

Soloist (deacon): Holiness befits Thy house, O Lord, forever. (v. 5b)

Choir (people): The Lord is King; He is robed in majesty.

Soloist (deacon): The Lord is King;

Choir (people): He is robed in majesty.

Early testimony indicates that responsorial psalmody was also employed for the singing of the *koinonikon* (communion hymn) at the Divine Liturgy and the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts. Psalm 35 serves as the communion hymn for the Liturgy of



**The
antiphons of
the Liturgy are
the prophecies
of the prophets,
foretelling the
coming of the
Son of God.**

**—St. Germanus
of Constantinople**

the Presanctified Gifts, with the first half of verse 9 being used as the common response: “Taste and see that the Lord is good.” From the testimony of St. Cyril of Jerusalem and others, this was also the communion psalm at the Divine Liturgy. St. Cyril, writing in 348 to the congregation of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, testifies that the chanter invites all to communion of the holy mysteries with a sacred melody, saying: “Taste and see, that the Lord is good.”⁷ St. Augustine (354–430), St. Jerome (342–420), and St. Ambrose (339–397) all testify to the singing of this verse during communion. From the descriptions of Eusebius, Egeria, St. John Chrysostom, and others, the communion psalm prior to the fourth century was chanted responsorially, the soloist chanting the verses of the psalm and the people responding with a constant phrase as a refrain.

Beginning with the fourth century, antiphonal psalmody began to gain in popularity, first in Jerusalem, then spreading to all parts of the Eastern Empire. The antiphonal format was especially associated with the cathedral rite, which stressed the celebratory nature of liturgical services by singing everything. As distinguished from responsorial psalmody, the antiphonal form called for the division of the people into two choirs, each of which responded alternately with a short, common refrain to psalm verses chanted by one (or two) soloist chanters.⁸ These short refrains were either a selected psalm verse, an Alleluia, a short nonscriptural phrase (such as “Glory to Thee, O Lord,” “Have mercy on us, O Lord,” etc.), or an independent sacred strophic hymn, called a *troparion*. At the conclusion of the psalm verses, the little doxology (“Glory to the Father . . .”) was chanted, followed by a terminating troparion.

An example is the antiphonal chanting at the Paschal service. The service begins with the clergy chanting the Paschal Troparion, “Christ is risen,” thrice. The people respond likewise. Then selected verses of Psalm 67 (“Let God arise . . .”) are chanted by the clergy, alternating with the singing of the Paschal Troparion by the people. At the conclusion of the psalm verses, the clergy chant the “Glory to the Father . . .” followed by the singing of the first half of the Paschal Troparion. The second half is then sung by the people, thus concluding the antiphon.

The antiphonal format is used today at the beginning of the Divine Liturgy (in the Greek tradition) and at liturgies on feast days of the Lord (in

the Slavic tradition). Examples of troparia inserted between the psalm verses include: “Through the prayers of the Theotokos, O Savior, save us,” “O Son of God, who rose from the dead/who were born of the Virgin/who were baptized in the Jordan/who ascended in glory, save us who sing to Thee,” in addition to the troparion of the particular feast on major feast days.

The antiphon serves a specific function in liturgical worship. St. Germanus writes in his commentary on the Liturgy that “the antiphons of the Liturgy are the prophecies of the prophets, foretelling the coming of the Son of God.”⁹ The words of the Psalms were used many times by Christ Himself to foretell his suffering, death, and Resurrection. The texts of the Psalms are understood in the light of Christ—they “point” to Christ. The insertion of newly composed troparia, serving as refrains between the verses of a psalm, functions as the Church’s interpretation of the psalm; e.g., “Let God arise . . .” (Ps. 67:1) points to the words of the Paschal Troparion, “Christ is risen from the dead . . .” The Resurrection of Christ from the dead is the fulfillment of the prophecy uttered by the psalmist.

Clearly, in both form and function, the use of liturgical dialogue (litany and the Anaphora as examples) and responsorial and antiphonal psalmody (prokeimena, communion hymns, antiphons) implies the active participation of the people. These forms not only add variety to the liturgical service, but they also stress the corporate nature of our church rites, and provide, even for the least learned, least musically talented person, the possibility to join in this corporate action. All that is required is the desire of the mind and the arousal of the soul to join in with the rest of the faithful.

In this context, then, singing is an indispensable part of Orthodox worship in which all the people present participate. This does not imply, however, that everyone must sing everything. Traditionally, there were solo chanters who were responsible for singing the changing verses of selected psalms, and small groups of chanters who were at times appointed to sing special types of hymns that changed from day to day, feast to feast, or season to season. But this does not mean that liturgical singing was understood as a private or personal function which would force part of the gathering to become simply passive listeners or spectators. Those specially trained chanters had the duty to lead the singing, to maintain harmony and good order in the liturgical responses.

Hymnography

What then, brethren? When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification. (1 Cor. 14:26)

Be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart, and for everything giving thanks in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father. (Eph. 5:18–21)

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, as you teach and admonish one another in all wisdom, and as you sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him. (Col. 3:16–18)

It is unfortunate that there exists very little documentation of the worship services of the earliest Christian communities. Very few texts remain from the first centuries of Christianity. Those that do mention or refer to elements that would be used by Christians at communal prayer are not at all concerned with describing the details of a specific Christian worship service. The Gospels of Matthew and Mark recount the Holy Supper of Jesus with His disciples, and say that, following the breaking of the bread and the drinking of the cup, they “sang a hymn and went out to the Mount of Olives” (Matt. 26:30; Mark 14:26). There is no apparent way to identify what particular hymn Jesus and His disciples sang, just as there is no possible way to determine exactly what psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs St. Paul referred to in his exhortation to the Colossians. Scholars of both liturgy and church music are not in agreement as to whether these three words—psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs—are synonymous or whether they designate three particular forms of musical song. We might agree with the opinion expressed by Egon Wellesz, the eminent historian of Byzantine music, that these three terms clearly signify different forms of praise. “Psalms” refers to the collection of psalms that were customarily used in the Jewish synagogue; “hymns” are new compositions that the early Christians wrote, similar to the hymn fragments found in the New Testament; and “spiritual songs” were “melismatic melodies of the alleluias and other exultant

songs of praise.”¹⁰ Or we may see these simply as three different words used synonymously by the Apostle, in a passage that makes the point that singing is not to be rendered simply for pleasure, but as an expression of gratitude and thanksgiving to God for everything He has done.

In the New Testament, and especially in the Book of Revelation, we find fragments of hymns that the early Christians composed, knew by memory, and passed on orally to one another. Examples of new hymnography are found in the Didache and in the writings of Justin Martyr. And we know from the report of Pliny the Younger, governor of Bithynia and Pontus, to the Emperor Trajan that lapsed Christians, when they gathered together, sang a “hymn among themselves to Christ, as to a god.”¹¹ For whatever reason, however, these early hymns disappeared, and it is only in the fourth century, after the peace of Constantine, that the continuous development of liturgical hymnography in the Eastern Orthodox Church begins. This development was not uniform throughout the Greek-speaking world, nor was it accepted without reservation by the Christian communities, especially the monastic ones.¹²

Part II of this article begins on page 14. Notes are continued on page 18.

- 1 The Greek word *eleison* is from the word *elios*, which translates the Hebrew word *hesed*. This word, although many times translated by “mercy,” means more “steadfast love, tenderness, compassion, or loving-kindness.” As Fr. Thomas Hopko writes: “It is not a simple plea for pardon, but a supplication that God continue to show His love to us.” Hopko, Thomas, *The Lenten Spring* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1983), p. 62.
- 2 Paul Meyendorff, “The Liturgical Path of Orthodoxy in America,” in *St. Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly*, Vol. 40, nos. 1 & 2.
- 3 Pseudo-Chrysostom, *De poenitentia*, PG LXIV, pp. 12–13. Cf. James McKinnon, *Music in Early Christian Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 90.
- 4 Letter CCVII, PG 32. Quoted in McKinnon, *op. cit.*, p. 68.
- 5 For liturgical use in Orthodox worship, the Psalter (150 Psalms) is divided into twenty sections, or *kathismata*, with three sets of psalms in each section. Especially in monasteries, all 150 psalms are chanted in the course of a week, beginning at Vespers on Saturday evening and concluding at Matins on the following Saturday.
- 6 *De oratione* xxvii, 27, PLI, 1, col. 1301.
- 7 St. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Lectures on the Christian Sacraments*, edited by F. L. Cross (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1977), p. 79.
- 8 Conomos, Dimitri E., *The Late Byzantine and Slavonic Communion Cycle: Liturgy and Music* (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1985), p. 18.
- 9 St. Germanus of Constantinople, *On the Divine Liturgy*. The Greek text with translation, introduction and commentary by Paul Meyendorff (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1984), p. 73.

Be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart, and for everything giving thanks in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father.

(Eph. 5:18–21)

Communicating Sacred Text

by Anne Schoepp

AMEN

A choir director visiting our parish once marveled that he could understand every word during the service, and attributed it to our choir's good diction. His comment struck me as odd, because in rehearsals we don't often focus specifically on diction. As I mused over this relationship between diction and understanding a text, I began to see a whole process emerge—a process that moves us from the point of receiving a sacred text ourselves to drawing the believers into worship and prayer. Our visitor understood every word, so he could pray with us.

As choir directors and liturgical singers, we must bear the sacred Word with great care, for it is the divine Logos whom we worship. Christ Himself tells the woman at the well that “true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such to worship Him” (John 4:23). In his detailed chapter on speaking in tongues and prophesying (1 Cor. 14), St. Paul concludes, “I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding.” He goes on to say, “I would rather speak five words with my understanding, that I may teach others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue.” How many words do we sing in church that are not understood?

Johann von Gardner further delineates the role of the word in worship: “Only the word can give musical sounds a definite, unambiguous meaning. And in worship only the word can clearly express the ideas contained in prayer, instruction, contemplation, etc.”¹ The late Archbishop Averky, in his defense of congregational singing, warns us against making beautiful sounds that are not understood,

because this gives the worshipers the feeling of prayer instead of leading them in actual prayer, which is a grave deception.²

We can see, then, that liturgical singers must faithfully transmit the liturgical texts, as we seek to glorify God in true prayer. A failure to express hymns clearly—with meaning, prayer, and understanding—can cause a breakdown in our worship and eventually our faith as well; for when the factual basis for our faith is lost, we are prey to misguided beliefs and undirected emotions. We can even worship music as an end in itself, an idol.

With our goal set clearly before us, then, let us examine the process of communicating text clearly. Singers and chanters must engage in this process for themselves, while conductors need to prepare personally, then lead the choir through the steps together.

Select music that bears the text clearly.

Although chanters usually read directly from liturgical books, conductors and choir members often work off of musical scores. It is especially important for conductors, and others who are responsible for what their choirs sing, to begin with the text itself, and then ensure that the musical setting used is wedded properly to that text. The character of the music should support the text and not distract from it, or steal the show. The musical form must match the poetic form. Musical pulse and emphasis must coincide with textual pulse and emphasis. The overall pulse of the music should be constant, not speeding up and slowing down arbitrarily. The following steps should aid in the selection of musical settings.

Read the text.

This may seem obvious, but often we begin singing without taking in the message first. We must begin by receiving the holy words ourselves—reading them, and hearing them. The message and character of the text should be observed, as well as what it is telling us to do. “Come, let us worship and fall down before Christ.” “We magnify You.” “Intercede for us.” These phrases invite us to join in the action. As singers we must enter into the hymns and make each prayer our own prayer. Oftentimes as liturgical musicians, we are so “busy” during church services that we may not feel as if we have prayed. Receiving the texts ahead of time will allow us to take this step and worship the living God ourselves.

Note the liturgical function.

After simply reading the text, begin to study it in detail. Determine the liturgical function of the hymn. Is the hymn proclamatory, dogmatic, prophetic, gathering, or healing? It is important to know what purpose it has in the liturgy and what rubrics it may accompany.

Determine the poetic structure.

The next step is to determine the poetic structure of the text and understand how the phrases are grouped. There are many forms of liturgical poetry, which are worthy of study. (Archpriest and composer Fr. Sergei Glagolev encourages liturgical musicians to become poets, as well as liturgists and musicians.³) One can begin this process by carefully following the punctuation in order to group phrases correctly. Unfortunately, different editions and translations vary in punctuation, and some musical editions do not include punctuation at all. If phrase groupings are unclear, it may be necessary to refer to another source to clarify the text. Then look for repeated words or syntax patterns that indicate pairing or parallel ideas.

A common structure in liturgical poetry is the AB AB form. Some of the church tones follow an AB AB musical form as well. When the textual and musical forms coincide, it is wonderful, but sometimes we are not so fortunate. For example, the Troparion for the Meeting of the Lord in the Temple has an ABC ABC structure.

Rejoice, O Virgin Theotokos, full of grace!
From you shone the Sun of Righteousness,
Christ our God,
Enlightening those who sat in darkness.

Rejoice and be glad, O righteous elder;
You accepted in your arms the Redeemer of
our souls,
Who grants us the resurrection.

When this troparion is sung to Lvov/Bakhmetev’s Common Chant Tone 1, which has the aforementioned AB AB musical structure, the phrase grouping is changed and the meaning is confused.

Rejoice, O Virgin Theotokos, full of grace!
From you shone the Sun of Righteousness,
Christ our God,

Enlightening those who sat in darkness.
Rejoice and be glad, O righteous elder;

You accepted in your arms the Redeemer of
our souls,
Who grants us the resurrection.

Fortunately, this problem can be fixed by adding the bridge phrase for Tone 1, as shown in the musical example on page 9.

Psalmody is often sung in alternating, responsorial, or antiphonal forms. These structures can be honored by having the appropriate groups sing the different sections, such as men and women, choir and congregation, or Choir I and Choir II.

Once the sections are determined, look within them to see how thoughts are organized. For instance, a troparion is a refrain in itself, still used on feast days with psalm verses. The beauty of the troparion is that it distills the essence of a feast or commemoration for us, and concludes with a guided response, such as a supplication or proclamation. Within a given structure it is important to note operative or conclusive phrases.

Many hymns contain repetition. Sometimes repetition lengthens a hymn to match the associated liturgical function. Sometimes a phrase repeats for emphasis, or repetition may be part of the poetic form. We mustn’t dully repeat ourselves without purpose.

Follow the pulse of the text.

Now we begin to sing! When we sing unmeasured chant, the text provides the pulse. When we speak, we naturally group words together, and we hear best that way too. Most English texts follow a basically duple meter, with triple or other word groupings occurring less often. Sometimes, we find groups of three or four unaccented syllables in a row. Do not

Pray as is
meet and
undisturbed,
and chant with
understanding
and the right
rhythm.

—St. Neilos

The monks of Egypt do not care about the quantity of verses, but about the intelligence of the mind; aiming with all their might at this: “I will sing with the spirit: I will sing also with the understanding.” And so they consider it better for ten verses to be sung with understanding and thought than for a whole psalm to be poured forth with a bewildered mind. And this is sometimes caused by the hurry of the speaker, when, thinking of the character and number of remaining psalms to be sung, he takes no pains to make the meaning clear to his hearers, but hastens on to get to the end of the service.

—St. John Cassian the Roman

emphasize these unaccented syllables; the syllabic groupings must be observed. If necessary, these groups can be visually connected with a bracket placed above the text.

Word groups can be visually connected.

If you practice speaking a text a few times, you will find that it has a “macro,” or primary, pulse and a “micro,” or secondary, pulse. The macro pulse is stronger, and should be used as the basic pulse of your singing. In most cases, conducting this macro pulse is best, because it frees the choir to sing in a natural and understandable manner. The less stressed words flow by in between the macro pulses and fall naturally into place, correctly following the micro pulse. The phrases will remain intact, instead of being chopped up into bits of speech. Occasionally, a musical setting will warrant conducting the micro pulse as well. In this case, the micro pulse should be less emphasized than the macro pulse.

To see how this concept works, try saying the following phrase, first emphasizing the micro pulse (underlined words), then again using the macro pulse (boldface words).

When singing unmeasured **chant** the text provides the pulse.

In more melodic chant the melody and even harmony may also define the pulse, but don’t allow them to obscure the text. Use textual emphasis, motion, and phrasing to clarify meaning. Some musical editions use barlines and frequent time signatures to indicate the shifting meter, or in straight chant every syllable is assigned a quarter note. A score that is so complex can distract the eye from the text and turn the music into beat counting, instead of communicating text. When the text defines the pulse, it is usually best for barlines to simply indicate the end of a phrase. Regardless of the score used, remind the choir to follow the words with their eyes, not the notes, especially when singing music or tones which are very familiar.

Read texts together in rehearsal.

This step is essential in training choirs to sing phrases. Make sure the singers understand what is being said; sometimes there are surprises! Read a phrase as an example, and have them repeat it. They will naturally imitate word groupings. To drill long texts with shifting rhythms, read them aloud together. Teach singers to mark difficult word groupings as shown above. Reading together in rhythm can rest their voices from singing hard passages repeatedly and save rehearsal time. Reading aloud can also remind singers of how we speak a phrase. It is often more effective and efficient to ask singers to read and communicate the text than to explain every little aspect of phrasing, dynamics, and nuance.

Sing phrases.

Many Orthodox choirs sing words and syllables instead of textual or musical phrases. No one can understand someone who speaks in words or syllables instead of in phrases; much less can one understand someone singing this way. To sing a phrase, connect the words together mentally and then vocally on the vowels, “singing to the end of the phrase.” Long notes in particular need direction. Untrained singers may let a long note decay like the ring of a bell, just waiting for it to be over. Rather, we need to sing through a long note, connecting it to what follows.

Music

**If they ask
you to act as
the canonarch
of the choir,
do not act
carelessly and
lazily, but
thoughtfully
and with great
attention, as
though you
were spreading
with your voice
and hand the
divine words to
your brethren,
in front of the
King of all,
Christ.**

—St. Simeon the
New Theologian

This technique can be taught by example. Say the textual line for the choir, and have them repeat it; then sing it for them, and have them repeat it. Untrained singers can imitate fairly well. After much rehearsal of this sort, they will learn to sing full phrases themselves, and rehearsal time will be reduced to working unusual or difficult passages. Music that is sung in complete thoughts and phrases keeps the listeners engaged, instead of allowing them to drift off.

Breathe after a complete thought.

Breath placement can also connect or disconnect a thought. Breaths should be taken at places that clarify the meaning of the text, following the punctuation. When necessary, taking catch-breaths in rhythm can keep a thought moving forward. If possible, do not breathe when a textual thought continues across a musical cadence. This practice can improve places where the poetic form and musical form do not match. The technique of sneak breathing, in which singers breathe at different times, can help a choir get through a particularly long phrase together. Mark breathing and unusual word groupings on your master before copying to save rehearsal time.

Use nuance to clarify meaning.

In addition to singing full phrases, it is also important to examine the content of each phrase so that its execution is meaningful. In speech we naturally emphasize particular words in order to be properly understood. Note the important, operative or conclusive words in each phrase. In rehearsal, it is sometimes helpful to have the choir underline the words that they need to bring out or move towards, particularly when the music itself is not rhythmically clear, is slow, or the musical notation or a page turn distracts the eye from the rhythm of the text. Just as one would inflect a spoken sentence, meaning can be clarified by vocal movement, or nuance.

The musical term “nuance” is defined as “subtle modifications of intensity, tempo, touch, phrasing, etc.”⁴ The concept of nuance, or subtle modification, may be most helpful in communicating text, because subtle changes in the voice reflect the inflection of speech, which organizes the vocal sounds into something meaningful.

Some believe that singing in a monotone is the proper way to chant, as it does not try to interpret the text for the listener. However, singing in a monotone can impede the hearing of a text alto-

gether. Just as it is terribly difficult to listen to and understand one who speaks in a monotone, it is even harder to understand one who sings this way.

Rhythm and emphasis are inextricably linked. Emphasis defines the pulse, and even when we speak, there is a natural rhythm to our speech that draws the listener in. Properly applied nuance in the voice gives direction within a phrase, pointing to the important words. When we are taught to read, we are taught to emphasize words properly, and we discover that changing the inflection of words in a phrase can change the phrase’s meaning. Proper emphasis in singing liturgical texts similarly clarifies meaning and engages the faithful, leading their attention to God.

Use dynamics to support the ideas expressed.

Dynamics can either distract from or support the text, just like other musical factors. In general, singing lightly allows the voice more flexibility for phrasing. Dynamics should fit the character of the hymn—whether it is joyful, repentant, or otherwise—and simply support what is being said.

Find a balance.

A complete lack of dynamic change in a service can render it lifeless, making one wonder if the singers even noticed the words they were singing. And a lack of clarity in the singing leaves the faithful to sort out the odd assortment of vocal sounds for themselves, or worse, disengages them altogether. On the other hand, too much variety of sound—dynamic change, overemphasized rhythm, etc.—can become distracting, drawing attention to the music instead of to God. Finding that balance is one of the challenges we face.

It is hard to define precisely when too much is too much. Gradients in various aspects of music—volume, diction, phrasing—can depend on time and place, such as the particular feast day, the acoustics of a particular building, the number of people present, perhaps even their nationality, background, or common sense of piety. Also, keep in mind that the Body of Christ is composed of many different people with different sensitivities, so perhaps extremes should be avoided. There is no need to impose our own ideas upon the hymns of the Church; they are already full of life-changing truths, complete in themselves, except for the need to become living prayer sung by the assembly of believers.

Emotions have a proper place.

When singing chant, our God-given emotions are put into their proper place by being directed by the sacred text, that is, truth. Our hearts are warmed specifically towards God for the good deeds He has done, and not just stirred up in general. In Orthodox music the text and the music are inseparable. If we use our musical gifts to bring the text to life, people's emotions should be appropriately directed.

Practice good diction.

At last! Yes, good diction is very important. The choir needs to pronounce words correctly and uniformly. Uniform vowel sounds combined with clearly heard consonants enhance understanding. Overemphasized consonants can impair understanding. Make sure ending consonants are actually executed.

The following simple exercise can help to warm up a choir for good diction: "The tip of the tongue, the teeth, the lips." Repeat this sentence quickly on descending notes of the major scale, changing notes on the word "tongue" after the first time. Make sure your singers employ active tongues, teeth, and lips. Often singers have lazy lips and mouths.

Another helpful aid is to pretend to speak to someone on the other side of a glass window. When we do this, we help the person on the other side of the glass read our lips by emphasizing our facial movements. The best resource I know of for specific questions regarding diction is *The Singer's Manual of English Diction*, by Madeleine Marshall, published by Schirmer Books.

Practice!

It should be clear that rehearsal is essential for singing together and communicating text. If you are a choir member, it is essential that you be at

rehearsals. We have a rule in our parish that choir members must attend rehearsal regularly. If a singer wants to come only on Sundays and sing along, then he or she is welcome to sing with the rest of the congregation. This way the choir can sound as one united voice and clearly render the sacred texts.

ALTHOUGH THE PROCESS for communicating text may sound complicated and unattainable, it can become a habit and be followed very quickly with practice. A job well done has many rewards: it enables the assembly to pray, directing their hearts and minds to God; it teaches the faith; and it engraves the holy words in the hearts and minds of the faithful, enabling them to memorize these uplifting and spiritually beneficial hymns.

A deacon friend of mine once compared the words of the liturgy to a soft rain that falls down from heaven and washes the hearts of the people. May these holy words flow clearly through us! ✚

- 1 Von Gardner, Johann, *Russian Church Singing, Volume 1: Orthodox Worship and Hymnography* (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1980), p. 22.
- 2 Archbishop Averky, "On Congregational Singing," *Orthodox America*, July 1985, pp. 9-11.
- 3 Fr. Sergei Glagolev, "An Introduction to the Interpretation of Liturgical Music," *PSALM Notes*, Vol. 2, No. 1, Spring 1997, p. 2.
- 4 Willi Apel, ed., *Harvard Dictionary of Music* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1972).

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Learning to communicate text clearly has many rewards: it enables the assembly to pray, directing their hearts and minds to God; it teaches the faith; and it engraves the holy words in the hearts and minds of the faithful.

Kids say the darnedest things . . .

- ✚ "Sing the omni-oe song!" (referring to the Cherubic Hymn, "All we who...")
- ✚ "Can we sing the lettuce song? You know, 'Come lettuce worship.'"
- ✚ "Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy A-na!" (from a little girl called Ana)
- ✚ "The voice of the father-bear witnessed to Thee." ("... the Father bare witness...")
- ✚ "Let thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us as we have set our whole bondee." ("... our hope on Thee")
- ✚ "Who's DeeDee? You know, when we say, 'Christ is risen! DeeDee is risen!'"
- ✚ "Glory to Thy condensation, O Lord." ("condescension")
- ✚ "God grant you bunny ears!"



My choir director sometimes asks us to remove the vibrato from our voices and sing with straight tone, but I'm not sure how to do that or the purpose behind her request.

Various historical sources indicate that, at least until sometime in the 1800s, vibrato was used in Western or Western-influenced singing only occasionally to ornament and enhance the vocal line. And probably soloists used vibrato more than choral ensembles. Today, most singers use vibrato consistently in vocal production, especially those who have been trained by opera singers.

Vibrato is a means of pulsating the breath through the vocal line—in a sense shaking the tone—adding a bit more presence, weight, and command to the voice, at least from certain aesthetic points of view. Vibrato certainly helps carry the voice across large theatrical spaces like the Metropolitan Opera House in New York City and will allow the singer to sustain tone slightly longer, since the length of the breath is better preserved through pulsation. Singers who lack control over their vibrato will shake the tone either too quickly or too slowly. A singer with a “wide vibrato” or *tremolo* has little control over pitch and, in choral singing, will cause severe problems in blend and intonation.

Straight tone, the unfluctuating flow of air through the voice, helps cut through acoustically live spaces by narrowing the pitch into a purer sound, relating more authentically to the overtone series. Since the vocal tone can be somewhat lighter and cleaner, straight tone is easier to tune and blend within both smaller and larger choral ensembles. Of equal importance, diction is usually better articulated in straight tone, without constant vocal pulsation to cloud or obscure exact vowel and consonant formation. Choirs that perform in small or reverberant spaces will do much better with a straight tone approach. Also, many directors, especially in light of the recent focus on historically informed performance practices, prefer the cleanliness, purity, exactness, and flexibility of the straight tone sound. Others may consider the tone lacking in emotional or expressive warmth, according to nineteenth- and twentieth-century aesthetic influences. It certainly eliminates the problem of those singers with a “wobbly” tone, however, assuming they are willing and able to put aside old habits.

Singing with straight tone is not difficult. Some do it naturally (choirs of boys and young men almost always sing exclusively with straight tone). If you are used to vibrato, simply concentrate on a slightly stronger and more directed flow of air through the tone without forcing and “pressing into the throat.” Don’t be surprised if the breath must be retaken more often, at least at first, until the body adjusts to the technique. Most singers can develop the ability to sing either way.

Are there other configurations I can use to help the singers learn the music in rehearsal besides the normal way we stand for liturgy?

Generally speaking, a choir should rehearse in the same formation it uses when singing liturgy or when in performance. That said, there are several other rehearsal configurations which help engage the singers and enhance the process of musical discovery and choral development. These special configurations may be used at various times during rehearsal, depending on the needs of the choir.

by Mark Bailey

One possibility is to have the choir members form one large circle facing inward (singers should remain in sections) with

the conductor standing in the middle. This allows the singers to hear each other better as an ensemble as they learn the music. Intonation, blend, and articulation especially tend to come together more quickly in this formation.

If the choir rehearses in two rows, have the first row turn to face the second row (they may have to back up a bit for space). The conductor may stand at either end of the rows. This configuration allows each singer to step out of his or her “shell” and link to another singer from a different row. In both configurations, the conductor should encourage the singers to look at each other, sing to each other, and breathe together at every phrase. The conductor may even wish to drop out periodically to encourage the group to move on their own based on an agreed inner pulse. You may even want to see if they can begin a setting on their own without the conductor’s cue.

Mixed configuration—i.e., alternating singers from different sections so that no section members are linked side by side—tends to frighten less-experienced singers, but is nevertheless a wonderful tool for encouraging vocal independence. This is

usually done when a setting has already been introduced and requires further polishing.

Another possibility: if sections of the choir are fairly evenly balanced, the ensemble may be broken down into two or more small groups, exchanging one phrase after the next, also stressing vocal independence as well as projection and blended tone. This approach is especially helpful if the conductor ever desires antiphonal singing.

When standing in normal formation, some conductors like to assign each position for the sake of blend and balance. Either way, the creative use of choral formations will enhance the skills of the choir members and allow them to hear themselves and the music more acutely when standing in regular configuration.

Often our choir director admonishes us that we need to practice our music at home, but I'm not sure many of us understand how to do that. Do you have any practice tips that will make the rehearsal go more smoothly?

The way in which a singer may go about preparing for rehearsal depends largely on the makeup of his or her choir, the general level of experience of the choir members, and the liturgical circumstances in which they find themselves. For less experienced choirs or singers, becoming familiar with service structure, learning to read music, or just looking over the settings so that the text is familiar is a good start. For more experienced choirs, higher expectations may be in order. In those cases, here are some possibilities for practicing between rehearsals:

1 Identify and concentrate on challenging sections and individual phrases, rather than running an entire setting over and over.

2 See how much of the phrase you can do on your own with just a starting pitch. Then go to the piano to help with more difficult notes and intervals. Use the piano as much as necessary at first to help out, but eventually try to get to the point where you can sing each phrase *a cappella*.

3 Try to sing your part while playing another part on the piano (or having someone else play another part for you). You can also have someone else sing another part. Choose a part that seems similar or compatible in some way—e.g., parallel melodic motion, unison rhythmic movement, antiphonal melodies, etc.

4 Play the phrase or sub-phrase on the piano, then sing it back without the piano (this works best when the phrase is broken down into smaller pieces, then eventually done at full length). Work the phrase in this manner until the piano is no longer needed.

5 For metrical settings, speak the rhythm of the phrase on a single syllable (doo doo doo) and then speak the actual text in rhythm. For unmetered recitative-like settings, simply recite the text and pay attention to the natural inflection of the phrasing. This will help shape the phrase when singing.

6 Look over the music away from the piano, without singing it, taking note of what's there. Notice how the parts relate to each other—circle common tones and octaves, etc., and get to know what's going on around your part.

7 Get together in small groups and rehearse parts on your own.

8 Talk about and describe the music to captive audiences, or perhaps write down all you can remember about the music. Try to describe the details, such as time signature, speed, dynamics, meaning of the text, and vocal range. Discussing the music will reinforce your knowledge of it.

9 Read through the translations or original texts and ponder their meaning.

10 Study the liturgical assignment of the setting. What is going on liturgically at the time it is sung and why?

Remember, depending on your situation, some of these suggestions may be more feasible than others. In any case, even minimal contact with the music outside of rehearsal helps sustain the energy needed to improve and grow as a singer of sacred music. ✦

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Even minimal contact with the music outside of rehearsal helps sustain the energy needed to improve and grow as a singer of sacred music.

Forms of Liturgical Song

by David

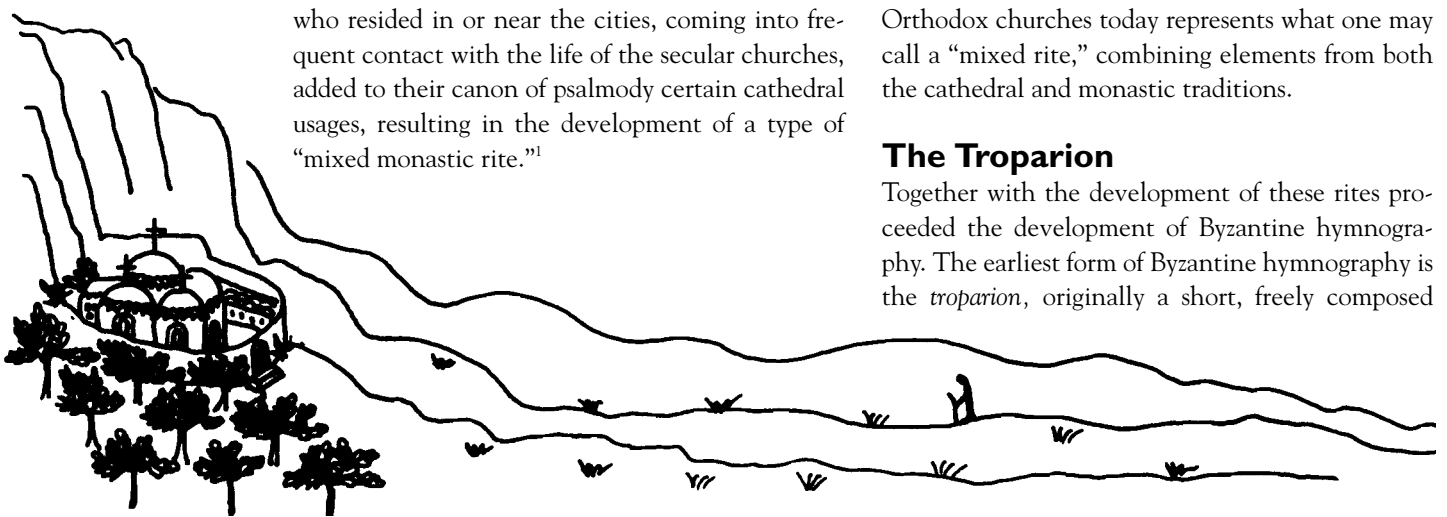
The signing of the Edict of Milan in 313 ended the persecution of Christianity and made it possible for Christians to express freely their faith and belief in Jesus Christ. And it is in this fourth century that both the monastic *ordo* and the so-called cathedral rite began their paths of development.

The “chanted rite” (*asmatika akolouthia*), also referred to as the cathedral rite, evolved from the services of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem. Parallel with this liturgical *ordo* was another pattern of worship that was being established and developed in the Egyptian, Palestinian, and Syrian monasteries. Characteristics of the cathedral *ordo* included extensive chanting, entrances and processions, which, in terms of musical style, resulted in the creation of professional choirs and the eventual development of an elaborate form of melismatic, soloistic singing. Monks who lived in the desert, especially those who settled in the Egyptian desert, emphasized the recitation of the Psalter, called the “canon of psalmody,” biblical readings, and penitential prayer. However, monks who resided in or near the cities, coming into frequent contact with the life of the secular churches, added to their canon of psalmody certain cathedral usages, resulting in the development of a type of “mixed monastic rite.”¹

The liturgical practice that centered around the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem gradually spread, probably by way of Antioch, to Constantinople and the Great Church of Hagia Sophia, eventually influencing the rites of all the cathedral churches of the Orthodox world. The Palestinian mixed monastic *ordo*, developed primarily in the Monastery of St. Sabbas, was little by little adopted by the monks of Constantinople, from whence it spread to other monastic centers, becoming the model for the Typikon of Mount Athos. The fusion of elements of one rite with another was not unusual during this process of development and transference, and eventually it was the monastic *ordo* that prevailed over the cathedral rite for the services of the Divine Office. For the Eucharistic Liturgy, however, the usages of the Constantinopolitan cathedral rite predominated. Symeon of Thessalonika, in his treatise on prayer (15th century), testifies to the disappearance of this rite in Constantinople as a result of the Latin persecution (i.e., the occupation of Constantinople by the Crusaders in 1204). Thus, the Typikon in use by Orthodox churches today represents what one may call a “mixed rite,” combining elements from both the cathedral and monastic traditions.

The Troparion

Together with the development of these rites proceeded the development of Byzantine hymnography. The earliest form of Byzantine hymnography is the *troparion*, originally a short, freely composed



Part II:

The Development of Hymnography in the Cathedral and Monastic Rites

Drillock

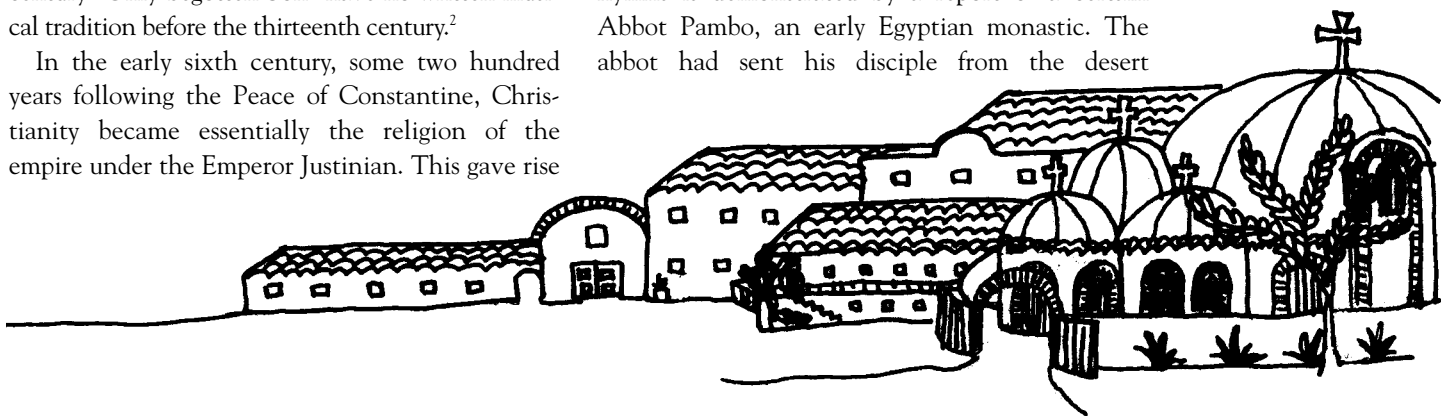
prayer or hymn of praise which was inserted after each verse of a psalm or biblical canticle, such as the song of Moses (Ex. 15:1–15), the prayer of Azariah (Dan. 3:26–45), or the song of the Three Children (Dan. 3:52–88). In the fifth century, troparia, now composed in strophic form and much longer, became a regular part of the Vespers and Matins. The Vespereal hymn, “Gladsome Light,” which glorifies God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, is an example of a troparion, as is the hymn, “Only-Begotten Son,” ascribed to Justinian I (527–565).

Although we are unable to know how these early troparia sounded, as no musical manuscripts from this period have survived, musicologists generally agree that these early Byzantine hymns had simple melodies, inasmuch as they were known and rendered by the congregation. The tunes themselves were probably in syllabic form, i.e., one note or tone to each syllable of the text, and were not written down. The troparion, “Gladsome Light,” already referred to as ancient by St. Basil the Great (c. 330–379) and still the central hymn of the Orthodox Vespers, has no written music before the sixteenth century. Likewise, the Great Doxology, dating to at least the fourth century, and the sixth-century “Only-begotten Son” have no written musical tradition before the thirteenth century.²

In the early sixth century, some two hundred years following the Peace of Constantine, Christianity became essentially the religion of the empire under the Emperor Justinian. This gave rise

to a flurry of activity in the building of churches and their artistic decoration. Justinian ordered the building of Hagia Sophia with the specification that it be large enough to hold the court, the Senate, the patricians, and a huge crowd. Justinian also ordered that the number of the clergy at Hagia Sophia and the three churches annexed to it not exceed 425, which included 60 priests, 100 deacons, 40 deaconesses, 90 subdeacons, 100 doorkeepers, 110 lectors and 25 singers.³ Such dimensions could not but affect the way in which the liturgical services were celebrated. Entrances and processions became rituals in themselves, and new hymns and chants were needed in order to fill up the time now required for these added entrances and processions.

The splendor and majesty that was to be the characteristic trait of the developing cathedral rite had, as its distinctive counterpart, the more austere form and content of the strict or pure monastic ordo. While troparia were considered an integral part of cathedral worship, they were not easily accepted by all monastic communities. Especially to the monks living in seclusion, such as those of desert monasteries, such singing was an aberration of prayer. Such an attitude towards the singing of hymns is demonstrated by a report of a certain Abbot Pambo, an early Egyptian monastic. The abbot had sent his disciple from the desert



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should sing
hymns to Him
with gladness.

—St. John
Chrysostom

monastery to Alexandria to sell the products of the monks' labor. The disciple spent sixteen days in the city, passing his nights in the vestibule of the Church of St. Mark, where he observed the services and listened to the singing of troparia. Upon returning to the monastery, the disciple became very dejected. Abbot Pambo saw that his disciple was troubled, and asked him the reason. The disciple felt they wasted so many days in the desert singing neither kanons nor troparia such as he had heard in Alexandria. To this the abbot replied:

Woe to us, my son! The days have come when monks turn away from the enduring nourishment which the Holy Spirit gives them and surrender themselves to singing. What kind of contrition (*katanyxis*) is that? How can tears come from the singing of troparia? How can a monk possess contrition if he stays in the church or in his cell and raises his voice like the lowing of the cattle? For when we stand in God's sight we must be most contrite and not presumptuous. Monks have not come into this desert to place themselves before God in pride and presumption, to sing melodic songs and make rhythmic tunes, to shake their hands and stamp their feet. Our duty is to pray to God in holy fear and trembling, with tears and sighing, with devotion and diligence, with modesty and with a humble voice. See, I tell you, my son, the days will come when Christians will destroy the books of the holy Evangelists, the holy Apostles and the inspired Prophets, and they will rip up the Holy Scriptures and compose troparia in their place.⁴

That singing is a detriment to prayer resulting in the loss of contrition is a theme that occurs often in the writings and tales of many of the desert fathers and eastern monastics. Abba Silvanus warned his disciple that even the chanting of psalms in a melodic fashion is the first pride and exaltation, "for you say: 'I sing, but my brother does not.'"⁵ Abba Silvanus also warned that "singing hardens the heart, turning it into stone and keeping the soul from repentance. If you desire to repent, abandon singing."⁶ Even St. John Chrysostom, in response to a question concerning why psalms are sung rather than recited, explained:

When God saw that many men were lazy, and gave themselves only with difficulty to spiri-

tual reading, He wished to make it easy for them, and added the melody to the Prophet's words, that all being rejoiced by the charm of the music, should sing hymns to Him with gladness.⁷

The Kontakion

The creation of a new poetical form in the sixth century is associated with the names of the poet-hymnographers Anastasius, Kyriakos, and, above all, Romanos. Although at the time of its creation, this genre was known simply as a hymn, psalm, poem, song, or prayer, the name of *kontakion* (from *kontos*, or scroll, on which the parchment containing the hymn was wound) came to be used to designate this specific poetic form. A kontakion consists of eighteen to thirty, or sometimes more, stanzas (*oikos*), all structurally alike, with the exception of an introductory verse (*prooemium*). This prooemium is rhythmically and melodically independent of the *oikos* with the exception of the last line, which serves as the common refrain (*epihymnion*) for all the stanzas. The length of a single *oikos* varies from three to thirteen lines. All the *oikoi* are composed on the pattern of a model stanza, referred to as the *himos* (*eimos*). The occurrence of the refrain at the end of each stanza indicates that the kontakia were sung by a soloist, with the choir or congregation joining at the singing of the refrain.

The stanzas of the kontakion are connected by their opening letters into an acrostic which spells out the name of the composer, the name of the liturgical feast for which it is written, or simply the alphabet. For example, the acrostic of the kontakion written by Romanos for the Feast of the Nativity of Christ spells out "a hymn of humble Romanos."

With the kontakion came also a new system of versification requiring that all stanzas of a poem have the same number of lines as the *himos* on which they were modeled. It was not sufficient that each line of a stanza correspond to a line in the model stanza, that is, having the same number of syllables, but the stress accents as well were required to fall on the corresponding syllables of each line in the *himos*.⁸ This would enable the accentuated notes of the melody to coincide with the accentuated syllables of the stanzas. In this way the music and the poetry of a kontakion combine to make a single entity. It is thus not surprising that the hymnographers of this period were not only poets, but were also skilled musicians, well versed in the Bible and theology.

The kontakia of Romanos, himself a converted Syrian Jew, reveal the influence of three types of literature developed in Syria: namely, the *memra*, a kind of poetical homily that followed the reading of the Gospel in the morning service; the *sougitha*, a series of strophic stanzas attached to homilies, which used dialogue throughout and the first letters of each stanza of which frequently formed an acrostic; and the *madrasha*, a favorite form employed in the works of St. Ephrem, using rhyme, variety of meter, a refrain, and an acrostic.⁹ While all of these elements can be found in the kontakia, the richness of Romanos' kontakia clearly surpasses those Syrian poetic forms mentioned above. The accentual form was improved, the accentual rhythm was more varied, and the refrain, which in the Syrian literature was an independent line, was related to the content of each stanza, thus heightening the poem's dramatic effect and involving the congregation much more directly with the personae of the poetic dialogues.

The Kanon

The last period of Byzantine hymnography began towards the end of the seventh century with the introduction of the *kanon* into the morning service (*Orthros*). The *kanon* is a complex poetical form made up of odes, each of which originally consisted of from six to nine troparia. The first troparion of each ode, called the *hirmos*, serves as a model, establishing both the melody and rhythm for all subsequent troparia in that ode. While the theme of the *hirmos* is taken from the theme of one of the biblical canticles, oftentimes simply paraphrasing specific verses of the canticle, the troparia which follow each *hirmos* develop themes related to the feast or saint to which the *kanon* is written. At first, *kanons* were composed only for Lent, then for the period between Easter and Pentecost.

This new hymn form replaced the singing of the canticles, which from now on would only be read, followed by the singing of the appropriate ode of the *kanon*. At a later date, when *kanons* were composed for all feast days of the ecclesiastical year, the custom of reciting the canticle before the singing of the *hirmos* and troparia was maintained during Lent and between Easter and Pentecost; on other days the canticles were simply omitted. Towards the end of the seventh century, the *kanon* replaced the full *kontakion* as the predominant literary form in the hymnography of the Church. The main difference is that whereas the *kontakion* is a poetical

homily that paraphrases and comments on Scripture, the *kanon* is a hymn of praise that makes thematic connections between the biblical canticle and the feast or occasion for which the *kanon* was composed.

Authors of *kanons* include Andrew of Crete (660–740), John of Damascus (675–749), Kosmas of Jerusalem, and, in the ninth century, Theodore of Studite and Joseph the hymnographer.

Hymnography in the Liturgical Cycle

All three types of hymnography—troparion, *kontakion*, and *kanon*—are organized for use in worship according to the Church's division of *liturgical time*. This time is comprised of a daily cycle, from morning to evening; a weekly cycle, from Sunday to Sunday; and a yearly cycle, from Pascha to Pascha.¹⁰

The texts of the hymns and prayers for the offices of the daily cycle are found in the *horologion* (lit., "the book of the Hours"). The book called the *Oktoechos* contains the proper chants (the movable hymns) for the services of the weekly cycle, arranged in eight weekly sections, each sung in one of the eight modes or tones. Each of these eight sections is further arranged so that the ordering of the propers corresponds to the ordering of the services for each day of the week, beginning with Vespers on Sunday (celebrated Saturday evening) and concluding with Matins of Saturday. Further, the hymns found in the *Oktoechos* will correspond thematically to the commemorations of the days of the week: praise of the Resurrection on Sunday, the angels on Monday, St. John the Baptist on Tuesday, the Cross on Wednesday and Friday, the Apostles and St. Nicholas on Thursday, and the martyrs and the Theotokos on Saturday.

The *Menaion* (lit., "monthly") contains the hymns written for the commemoration of saints and the celebration of feasts throughout the fixed calendar year. Arranged in numerical order for each day of the month, the *Menaion* is generally issued in twelve volumes, one for each month of the year. Special hymns for the fasting period of Great Lent, beginning with the four Sundays before Lent and concluding with the midnight service before the Paschal Matins, are found in the *Triodion*, and the propers for the services of the Paschal Vigil through the Feast of All Saints, celebrated on the Sunday following Pentecost, are contained in the *Pentecostarion*. From such a review, one can see clearly

The music and the poetry of a *kontakion* combine to make a single entity. It is thus not surprising that the hymnographers of this period were not only poets, but were also skilled musicians, well versed in the Bible and theology.

The pattern itself is flexible, for it must be able to be adapted to the specific requirements of the text.

the ordering of the church's worship in reference to the calendar of time—daily, weekly, and yearly.

From at least the eighth century, chants in the Byzantine Church were systematically assigned to one of eight Byzantine musical modes (*echos*). The chief characteristic of a Byzantine mode is not its identification with a particular "scale" (such as the eight modes of ancient Greek musical theory), but the essence of its melodic form. Dimitri Conomos writes: "Each mode is characterized by a deployment of a restricted set of melodic formulas peculiar to that mode, which constituted the substance of the hymn."¹¹

For the chanting of the psalms, each tone (mode) employed distinct melodic patterns for the intonation and the cadence. However, the recitation between the intonation and cadence, though more elaborate than a simple monotone, is much less important in terms of tonal distinction; there is a clear dividing line, however, between the recitation part and the cadence. The pattern itself is flexible, for it must be able to be adapted to the specific requirements of the text. The determining factor for the adaptation of the intonation and the recitation is textual accent. Depending on the text, the intonation pattern may be expanded or contracted, while the elaboration of the reciting tone is governed by the textual accents. The determining factor for the cadence, however, is not textual accent, but rather syllable count. As Oliver Strunk has shown, "regardless of their accentuation, the final syllables of the particular verse or half-verse will be mechanically applied to the tones and tone-groups of the cadential part of the formula."¹²

Likewise, the modal characteristics remain the same for the musical rendition of hymns, with the exception that a greater number of distinct musical patterns are utilized. When composing a hymn, the hymnographer's task consisted in selecting the

melodic patterns he would use, adapting them to the words of the hymn, phrase by phrase, and then linking them together based on the whole text. ✦

Notes to part I, continued from page 5

- 10 Wellesz, Egon, *A History of Byzantine Music and Hymnography*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 41.
- 11 Letter x, xcvi; LCL II, 402–404, quoted in McKinnon, *op. cit.*, p. 27.
- 12 Mitsakis, Kariophilus, "Hymnography of the Greek Church in the Early Christian Centuries," in *Jahrbuch der Osterreichischen Byzantinistik* (Wien: Osterreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1971), Band 20, 39.

Notes to part II

- 1 Cf. Taft, Robert, *The Liturgy of the Hours in East and West* (Collegeville, MN: ??, 1986), pp. 75–91.
- 2 Conomos, Dimitri, *Byzantine Hymnography and Byzantine Chant* (Brookline: Hellenic College Press, 1984), p. 11.
- 3 Quoted in Wellesz, *op. cit.*, p. 165.
- 4 *Apothegmata Patrum*, quoted by Quasten, Johannes, *Music & Worship in Pagan & Christian Antiquity* (Washington, D.C.: National Association of Pastoral Musicians, 1983), p. 95.
- 5 Nikon of the Black Mountain, *Pandects*, treatise 29, quoted by Uspensky, Nicholas, *Evening Worship in the Orthodox Church* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985), p. 62.
- 6 *Ibid.*
- 7 In *psalmum xli*, I: PG LV, 156, quoted in Reese, Gustave, *Music in the Middle Ages* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1940), p. 65.
- 8 Trypanis, C. A., "Romanos the Melodist," in *The Orthodox Ethos*, Studies in Orthodoxy, Vol. 1, edited by A. J. Philippou (Oxford: Holywell Press, 1964), p. 187.
- 9 Carpenter, Marjorie, *Kontakia of Romanos, Byzantine Melodist, I: On the Person of Christ* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1969), p. XIX.
- 10 Cf. Schmemmann, Alexander, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1986), pp. 151–162.
- 11 Conomos, Dimitri, *Byzantine Hymnography and Byzantine Chant*, p. 33.
- 12 Strunk, Oliver, *Essays on Music in the Byzantine World* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1977), p. 174.

David Drillock is Professor of Liturgical Music at St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary. This article is excerpted from an article entitled, "Liturgical Song in the Worship of the Church," which originally appeared in St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly 41 (1997), pp. 183–218. The article is reprinted with permission.

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A Common Vision, A Common Need

At its annual meeting in June, the PSALM Board of Directors focused its discussion on ways in which PSALM can better fulfill its role as a provider of communication and service to the Orthodox musical community and include in project planning and execution those who share our vision.

It has been our collective experience that when liturgical musicians come together, good things happen: common needs and goals emerge, communication and trust increase, and we all begin “to learn from one another,” as the motto of PSALM states. In view of this, the Board discussed the need to bring together the many leaders of Orthodox church music, representing various traditions and jurisdictions in a roundtable discussion. Such a meeting would undoubtedly help church musicians develop channels for collaboration in the areas of information and education, training and professional development, as well as music publishing and distribution. PSALM is interested in working with any and all existing church music departments, institutions, and organizations on planning, organizing, and facilitating such a roundtable meeting.

The Board also focused on expanding PSALM’s organizational structure in a way that would improve the workflow for existing projects, as well as accommodating new undertakings as they develop. We endorsed five main areas of activity: *PSALM Notes*, PSALM Music Press, Internet projects, conferences, and development. Each project will be supervised by a Board-appointed Executive Committee that will implement the specific details of each project and report to the Board at their annual meeting in June. Each committee will comprise dedicated volunteers who are committed to serving the Orthodox musical community and whose enthusiasm and expertise will provide the necessary energy and experience to accomplish these goals.

With this new structure in place, the Board appointed Dr. Peter Jermihov (Choir Director and Reader at Holy Trinity Orthodox Cathedral, Chicago) as Music Editor for PSALM Music Press and named an Executive Committee consisting of Vladimir Morosan, Walter Obleschuk, Peter Jermihov, Kevin Smith, and Alice Hughes to develop and oversee the activities in the area of music publishing. The decision was made to devote PSALM Music Press, Volume 2, scheduled for

release in early 2001, to a compilation of the Paschal Troparion, “Christ is risen,” in many different languages and chant traditions. We believe such an issue is a direct manifestation of our mission to draw upon the collective richness and variety of musical traditions within the Orthodox faith.

While the PSALM Board is deeply committed to our mission and the projects mentioned above, this commitment alone is not enough to bring them to fruition. Our only sources of income are memberships and donations. With about 200 current members, membership fees account for only 20% of our total budget; the rest is funded by donations. Without a broader, church-wide base of support and significant additional funding, we will be unable to meet our goals. For this reason we are looking for donors willing to underwrite specific projects as well as our general administrative expenses. Each issue of *PSALM Notes* costs \$1500 to produce and mail. PSALM Music Press, Volume 2, will cost \$1000 to produce. We need approximately \$2500 to jump-start the web-based “Orthodox liturgical music resource”—a mechanism for making available a wide variety of musical scores for downloading, together with an extensive listing of books, articles, and other reference materials for the liturgical musician.

Can you give \$100 or more to underwrite the cost of one of these projects? Thirty individual gifts of \$100 would cover the cost of producing *PSALM Notes* for one year. Ten gifts of \$100 would cover the cost of producing PSALM Music Press, Volume 2. Twenty-five additional gifts of \$100 would help us bring our dream of an Orthodox musical web resource to your computer. Your tax-deductible donation to PSALM, Inc. will help bring these projects closer to reality. You can also help by spreading the word about PSALM and its mission to fellow church musicians, clergy, and others in your community who are interested in supporting Orthodox liturgical music.

Vladimir Morosan, *President*
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BOARD NOTES



The Ministry of Hymns and Psalms

part 2

by St. Niceta of Remesiana

I MUST NOT BORE YOU, BELOVED, with more details of the history of the psalms. It is time to turn to the New Testament to confirm what is said in the Old, and, particularly, to point out that the office of psalmody is not to be considered abolished merely because many other observances of the Old Law have fallen into desuetude.¹ Only the corporal institutions have been rejected, like circumcision, the sabbath, sacrifices, discrimination in foods. So, too, the trumpets, harps, cymbals and timbrels. For the sound of these we now have a better substitute in the music from the mouths of men. The daily ablutions, the new-moon observances, the careful inspection of leprosy are completely past and gone, along with whatever else was necessary only for a time—as it were, for children. Of course, what was spiritual in the Old Testament, for example, faith, piety, prayer, fasting, patience, chastity, psalm-singing—all this has been increased in the New Testament rather than diminished. Thus, in the Gospel you will find, first of all, Zachary the father of the great John, after his long silence uttering a prophecy in the form of a hymn.² Nor did Elizabeth, who had been so long sterile, cease to magnify God in her soul when the son of promise had been born.³ And when Christ was born on earth, the army of angels sang a song of praise: “Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to men of good will” (Luke 2:14). The children in the Temple raised their voices to sing: “Hosanna to the Son of David” (Matt. 21:15)—only to make the Pharisees more angry. However, the Lord rather opened than closed the mouths of the little ones when He said: “Have you never read, Out of the mouth of infants and sucklings thou hast perfected praise [Matt. 21:16]. If these keep silence, the stones will cry out” (Luke 19:40). But I must be brief. The Lord

Himself, our teacher and master in words and deeds, showed how pleasing was the ministry of hymns when He went out to the Mount of Olives only after a hymn had been sung. With such evidence before him, how can anyone go on doubting the religious value of psalms and hymns? For here we are told that He who is adored and sung by the angels in heaven sang a hymn along with His disciples.

AND WE KNOW THAT LATER ON the Apostles also did this, since not even in prison did they cease to sing. So, too, Paul speaks to the Prophets of the Church: “When you come together, each of you has a hymn, has an instruction, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edification” (1 Cor. 14:26). And again, in another place: “I will sing with the spirit, but I will sing with the understanding also” (1 Cor. 14:15). So, too, James sets down in his Epistle: “Is any one of you sad? Let him pray. Is any one in good spirits? Let him sing a hymn” (James 5:13). And John in the Apocalypse reports that, when the Spirit revealed himself to him, he saw and heard “a voice of the heavenly army, as it were the voice of many waters and as the voice of mighty thunders, saying, Alleluia” (Rev. 19:6). From all this we may conclude that no one should doubt that this ministry, if only it is celebrated with true faith and devotion, is one with that of the angels, who, as we know, unhindered by sleep or other occupation, cease not to praise the Lord in heaven and to bless the Savior.

THESE THINGS BEING SO, BROTHERS, let us have full confidence in carrying out our ministry of song. Let us believe that we have been given a great, a very great, grace by God who has granted to us to sing

the marvels of the eternal God in the company of so many and such great saints, prophets and even martyrs. We confess to Him, with David, that “He is good.” And, with Moses, we sing in these great canticles the glory of the Holy and Divine Spirit. With Anna, who is a symbol of the Church—once sterile and now fecund—we strengthen our hearts in the praise of God. With Isaias, we keep our night watch. We join Habacuc in song. With the holy fathers, Jonas and Jeremias, we join song to prayer. With the three children in the flames, we call on every creature to bless the Lord. With Elizabeth our soul magnifies the Lord.

CAN ANY JOY BE GREATER than that of delighting ourselves with psalms and nourishing ourselves with prayer and feeding ourselves with the lessons that are read in between? Like guests at table enjoying a variety of dishes, our souls feast on the rich banquet of lessons and hymns.

ONLY, BROTHERS, LET US PLEASE GOD by singing with attention and a mind wide awake, undistracted by idle talk. For so the psalm invites us: “Sing ye wisely, for God is the King of all the earth” (Ps. 46:8). That is, we must sing with our intelligences; not only with the spirit (in the sense of the sound of our voice), but also with our mind. We must think about what we are singing, lest we lose by distracting talk and extraneous thoughts the fruit of our effort. The sound and melody of our singing must be suitably religious. It must not be melodramatic, but a revelation of the true Christianity within. It must have nothing theatrical about it, but should move us to sorrow for our sins.

Of course, you must all sing in harmony, without discordant notes. One of you should not linger unreasonably on the notes, while his neighbor is going too fast; nor should one of you sing too low while another is raising his voice. Each one should be asked to contribute his part in humility to the volume of the choir as a whole. No one should sing unbecomingly louder or slower than the rest, as though for vain ostentation or out of human respect. The whole service must be carried out in the presence of God, not with a view to pleasing men. In regard to the harmony of voices we have a model and example in the three blessed boys of whom the Prophet Daniel tells us: “Then these three, as with one mouth, praised and glorified and blessed God in the furnace, saying: Blessed art thou, O Lord the God of our fathers” (Dan. 3:51, 52). You

see that it was for our instruction that we are told that the three boys humbly and holily praised God with one voice. Therefore, let us sing all together, as with one voice, and let all of us modulate our voices in the same way. If one cannot sing in tune with the others, it is better to sing in a low voice rather than drown the others. In this way he will take his part in the service without interfering with the community singing. Not everyone, of course, has a flexible and musical voice. St. Cyprian is said to have invited his friend Donatus, whom he knew to be a good singer, to join him in the office: “Let us pass the day in joy, so that not one hour of the feast will be without some heavenly grace. Let the feast be loud with songs, since you have a full memory and a musical voice. Come to this duty regularly. You will feed your beloved friends if you give us something spiritual to listen to. There is something alluring about religious sweetness; and those who sing well have a special grace to attract to religion those who listen to them.”⁴ And if our voice is without harshness and in tune with the notes of well-played cymbals, it will be a joy to ourselves and source of edification to those who hear us. And “God who maketh men of one manner to dwell in His House” (Ps. 67:7) will find our united praise agreeable to Him.

When we sing, all should sing; when we pray, all should pray. So, when the lesson is being read, all should remain silent, that all may equally hear. No one should be praying with so loud a voice as to disturb the one who is reading. And if you should happen to come in while the lesson is being read, just adore the Lord and make the Sign of the Cross, and then give an attentive ear to what is being read.

OBVIOUSLY, THE TIME TO PRAY is when we are all praying. Of course, you may pray privately whenever and as often as you choose. But do not, under the pretext of prayer, miss the lesson. You can always pray whenever you will, but you cannot always have a lesson at hand. Do not imagine that there is little to be gained by listening to the sacred lesson. The fact is that prayer is improved if our mind has been recently fed on reading and is able to roam among the thoughts of divine things which it has recently heard. The word of the Lord assures us that Mary, the sister of Martha, chose the better part when she sat at the feet of Jesus, listening intently to the word of God without a thought of her sister (cf. Luke 10:42). We need not wonder,

continued on p. 22

**When
we sing, all
should sing;
when we pray,
all should pray.
So, when the
lesson is being
read, all should
remain silent,
that all may
equally hear.**



Christ in the Psalms

by Fr. Patrick Henry Reardon

Pastor of All Saints Orthodox Church,
Chicago, and Senior Editor of Touchstone

reviewed by Katherine Hyde

Surely one essential step in communicating sacred text, as Anne Schoepp's article in this issue exhorts us to do, is to gain a fuller understanding of the meaning of the Church's great hymnbook, the Psalms. This new book should be of great assistance in this task.

Fr. Patrick Reardon was chosen to translate the Septuagint Psalms for the upcoming complete *Orthodox Study Bible*, so he has clearly devoted a lot of time to their study. *Christ in the Psalms* consists of a brief meditation on each of the 151 psalms, written one at a time over a period of several years. As Fr. Patrick is quick to point out in his introduction, he has not followed a single consistent approach (e.g., liturgical, exegetical, devotional) but has allowed his mind to wander freely through the many levels of meaning available to us in the Psalms.

There are several strong themes that emerge, however. Preminent is that reflected in the book's title: bringing to our attention all the myriad places



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and ways that the Person of Christ is reflected, prophesied, and addressed throughout the Psalter. Another theme is the history of the liturgical use of particular psalms (both in East and West; Fr. Patrick is a former Episcopal priest)—information sure to be of special interest to liturgical musicians.

Fr. Patrick's lucid and beautiful prose makes this book a joy to read. He quotes freely from his own yet-to-be-published translation of the Psalter, which adds another dimension to the reader's understanding. Although he carefully disclaims any status as a biblical scholar, his interpretation is thoroughly grounded in patristic theology and hermeneutics, and based on the New Testament and liturgical uses of the psalms.

Christ in the Psalms is a rich treasure-trove of information and inspiration for anyone who desires to come to a greater understanding of the Psalms and their crucial place in the worship of the Orthodox Church.

Ministry of Hymns and Psalms *continued from p. 21*

then, if the deacon in a clear voice like a herald warns all that, whether they are praying or bowing the knees, singing hymns, or listening to the lessons, they should all act together. God loves "men of one manner" and, as was said before, "maketh them to dwell in his house" (Ps. 67:7). And those who dwell in this house are proclaimed by the psalm to be blessed, because they will praise God forever and ever. Amen.

- 1 Translation is based on C. H. Turner's suggestion, *pessum data*. I have followed his text for the passage beginning: *Cessaverunt plane . . .*
- 2 Luke 1:67-79. This, of course, is the Benedictus.
- 3 Here and at the end of Chapter 11 (according to the reading of the eighth-century Cava MS), it is supposed that Elizabeth, and not Mary, sang the *Magnificat*. The great weight of MS authority, including all Greek and Syriac texts, is in favor of Mary.

- 4 Cyprian, *Epist. ad Donatum* 16. The entire passage, "Not everyone, of course, . . . listen to them," is not found in five of the extant MSS. It appears, however, in the *Codex Cavensis*, in *Codex Vaticanus* 5729 (The Bible of Farfa), and in the Codex used by C. H. Turner.

Niceta of Remesiana was a fourth-century missionary bishop in what is now Yugoslavia. Niceta wrote several essays, which have survived, and a number of hymns, which unfortunately have not. This article was excerpted from "Liturgical Singing" (De Utilitate Hymnorum) from Volume 7 of the series Fathers of the Church, published by Catholic University of America Press, Washington, DC, and is used by permission. The beginning of the essay appeared in the previous issue of PSALM Notes, Vol. 4 No. 2.

Please note that Psalm references are given in the Hebrew numbering only, as in the original text. We apologize for any inconvenience this may cause.

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CALENDAR



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A Workshop for Choir Directors and Singers***
Ss. Peter and Paul Church, Jersey City, New Jersey. For more information, contact Choir Workshop, 109 Grand St., Jersey City, NJ 07302-4428, (201) 434-1986.

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Jan. 5, St Mary's Cathedral, Portland, OR. Jan. 6, Holy Rosary Catholic Church, Seattle, WA. For more information call (503) 236-8202 or (206) 523-5153.

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Liturgical Singing Seminar
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March 23–24, 2001

Cappella Romana concert, "The Akathist Hymn" by Ivan Moody
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Seminar, "Tradition in Service to Mission: Russian Orthodox Chant in the English Language"
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August 15–19, 2001

AOCA Sacred Music Institute
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