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Valerie Yova Sheets with Fr. Sergei Glagolev

A New Vision for PSALM

PSALM Annual Meeting Opening Remarks
(St. Vladimir's Seminary, June 2002)

by Valerie Yova Sheets, Executive Director

I would like to start by quoting something that was posted recently on the PSALM e-list:

Our churches are beautiful, our vestments are beautiful, our iconography is beautiful, and our music must be likewise. Someone once said to me, "Yes, but every liturgy is beautiful." I would agree with him in the sense that prayer to God is beautiful, that fellowship in Christ is beautiful. But if that were the only beauty that mattered for us, we would not have grand and ornate churches, gold-leafed 20-foot iconostases, and jewel-encrusted vestments. Another person once said to me, "All that matters is that it is prayerful and from the heart." I will concede that prayerfulness and sincerity are important. I will even concede that they are more important than "typical" accuracy and aesthetic beauty. This does not mean, however, that the latter two are UNimportant. We are Orthodox. Everything is important.

—John Michael Boyer

Every person sitting in this room right now has experienced the transforming, healing, enlivening power of Orthodox music in worship. We all know what is possible, and that is what unites us. And I think we all agree with John Boyer that it is indeed important.

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Valerie Yova Sheets

I envision a time when the music in every parish, no matter how large or small, is as important as it should be. A time when liturgical music sung beautifully, prayerfully, appropriately, and accurately is the norm rather than the exception, and when the bar is set high.

I envision a time when the priest and the musicians in every parish work together as a team, combining their professional expertise and skills in leading worship and proclaiming the Gospel.

I envision a time when the music of the Church is so important that the person who is leading and teaching that music is expected to be highly trained in music *and* the typikon, and this training is available and accessible in many forms.

I envision a time when choir directors have quick and easy access to a huge variety of Orthodox music from all ethnic traditions in a form that is actually legible!

I envision a time when each Orthodox choir director knows every other Orthodox choir director in his or her town, and perhaps even region, and feels connected to these people in a way that provides moral support, information, resources, and perhaps mentoring.

I envision a time when the choir director is considered a professional and a staff member, whether he or she is donating the enormous amount of time and talent that it takes to do a good job, or is being paid a salary.

It is this vision that brings me to PSALM at this time in my life. I believe that the music of the Church is too important to be mediocre; too important to be allowed to deteriorate because of neglect, lack of diocesan resources, or apathy.

The springing up of an organization like PSALM was inevitable. Many of us in this very room have

been experiencing the same frustrations building up over the past twenty years. I have certainly experienced that frustration on the parish level. I have felt that sense of powerlessness and isolation that many of you have felt, and have decided that this is an area of the Church where I can make a difference. I am grateful to Alice Hughes and Anne Schoepp for having the courage to go through the labor pains of giving birth to this baby. And to all of those who have donated their time and talent in these formative years, which are so crucial.

The decision to hire an Executive Director was a decision to gently push PSALM into puberty. (I will remind you in the coming months what puberty was like: full of changes, sometimes scary, sometimes exhilarating, lots of questions to be answered). I am honored to be working with such a fine group of people, and I am thrilled that this opportunity came along at exactly the right moment in my life.

I come to the position of Executive Director with a background that is steeped in the Church as well as in musical training and performance experience. I was born into the Orthodox Faith. My father was the choir director until he was ordained a deacon in his early forties. He attended St. Vladimir's briefly and was one of the first late-vocations deacons back in the 1970s. I was going to choir rehearsals with my father by the age of eight, and singing with him at weddings by the age of sixteen.

My bachelor's and master's degrees are both in vocal performance. I have sung professionally for twenty years in opera, oratorio, recitals, chamber music, and professional choruses, and I even sang in a restaurant for a year! I have had the opportunity to perform some of the world's most beautiful music with fine musicians.

But no experience on the performing stage can compare to an Orthodox service that is prayed and sung with skill, heart, and mind. No opera libretto can compare to the Canon of St. Andrew or Bridegroom Matins, or any number of liturgical texts. Beautiful music (Mozart, Bach, Brahms, Beethoven, Puccini, Verdi) is a gift from God, and it's a joy to hear. Beautiful liturgical music is beautiful to hear, but it is also much, much more. It is God's saving Word dancing on melody into the heart of man. At this point in my life, working with Orthodox musicians to empower them to be strong and able leaders of this music offers both a chance for personal fulfillment, and a chance to make a difference with the time and energy I have left to give.

David Drillock, Vlad Morosan, and Fr. Sergei Glagolev



The work that PSALM has set out to do, in a perfect world, would be done by a central music department for the entire country. Because we are still fractured into many jurisdictions, this work is left to be done by each individual diocese. Some of them are doing very fine work. But we, the musicians, lose out because of this situation. We miss the opportunity to learn from each other and to share the richness of the music of our different ethnic traditions.

What can I do to help PSALM pass through its adolescence into adulthood? These are some of the things that I will focus on in the next twelve to twenty-four months.

Building relationships

Organizations are made up of people. Relationships must constantly be nurtured, in our case between PSALM members, board members, staff, volunteers, donors, hierarchs, and other clergy.

Planning growth

It will be important to develop a plan for how PSALM will work to meet the many and varying needs that exist. A plan has to get its roots firmly established in the soil before any significant growth can happen. The next year will be a time of solidifying existing programs. A plan must also be developed that defines how and when new programs will be added. This plan must be based on priorities.

Building credibility

Because we are not under any one jurisdiction in America, PSALM needs to continue to build credibility with the hierarchs, clergy, parish council members, and with the musicians as well. They are all our partners. Building credibility has, in part, to do with how we build our board of directors and advisory board, how well we follow through with projects, and with remaining inclusive and balanced in the music and other resources we offer.

Flexibility

Flexibility is extremely important in a political, economic, and social environment that is changing so rapidly. We can stay flexible by being alert, aware, and well connected to our hierarchs, our clergy, and our members.

Fundraising

And, of course, last but not at *all* least, I will be focusing much of my attention on increasing finan-

cial resources for the organization so that we can maintain our current commitments in a respectable and timely fashion and begin to move forward with new projects.

Successful fund development has many components, including board development, membership recruitment, public relations, image-building, and strategic solicitation of private, corporate, and foundation funding. I will be leading the board of directors in a carefully developed plan that will include all of these components.

I look forward to working with all of you in one capacity or another. Please be patient with us as we continue to define our role in the Church, and please always feel free to offer your constructive criticism. We cannot progress in isolation. We need your advice, your support, and your prayers. I look forward to getting to know each of you in the coming days, months, and years. †

Beautiful liturgical music is beautiful to hear, but it is also much, much more. It is God's saving Word dancing on melody into the heart of man.



Discussion participants at the Annual Meeting

Annual Meeting attendees (St. Vladimir's Seminary, June 2002)



New PSALM Advisory Council Lends Wisdom, Expertise, and Guidance

In the spring of 2002, PSALM began to assemble a diverse and prestigious Advisory Council comprised of individuals, both clergy and laity, who are experts in various aspects and traditions of Orthodox liturgical music. The members of the Advisory Council are also deeply devoted to the advancement and excellence of Orthodox music throughout the English-speaking world and across all jurisdictional lines.

The Advisory Council will do precisely what the name implies: advise the Board and staff of PSALM on issues and projects that fall under their particular areas of expertise and knowledge. Some of them will also become members of the pool of experts available to teach at PSALM-sponsored music workshops.

- ✦ **Bishop JOB (Osacky)**, Bishop of Chicago and the Midwest, Orthodox Church in America
- ✦ **Bishop BASIL (Essey)**, Titular Bishop of Enteh al-Koura and Auxiliary Bishop for the Southwest Region and Mississippi Valley Deanery, Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese
- ✦ **Bishop SERAPHIM (Sorheim)**, Bishop of Ottawa and Canada, Orthodox Church in America
- ✦ **Fr. Elias Bitar**, pastor, St. George Orthodox Church, Little Falls, New Jersey
- ✦ **David Drillock**, Professor of Liturgical Music, St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary, Crestwood, New York
- ✦ **Helen Breslich Erickson**, Lecturer in Liturgical Music, St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary, Crestwood, New York; Chair, Department of Performing Arts, Hackley School (Tarrytown, New York)
- ✦ **Fr. Theodore Heckman**, pastor, Saint Mark's Orthodox Church, Wrightstown, Pennsylvania
- ✦ **Peter Jermihov**, D.M.A., composer, conductor, and choral music teacher; reader and choir director, Holy Trinity Orthodox Cathedral, Chicago, Illinois
- ✦ **Fr. George Johnson**, pastor, Holy Apostles Orthodox Church, Beltsville, Maryland
- ✦ **Marina Ledkovsky**, Ph.D., writer and editor, Professor Emeritus of Slavic Languages and Literatures, Barnard College, Columbia University, New York; widow of Prof. Boris M. Ledkovsky, church composer and choir director
- ✦ **Alexander Lingas**, Ph.D., Byzantine chant specialist, music director of the professional music ensemble Cappella Romana; Assistant Professor, Arizona State University School of Music, Phoenix, Arizona
- ✦ **Fr. Lawrence Margitich**, pastor, St. Seraphim Orthodox Church, Santa Rosa, California
- ✦ **Fr. Stephan Meholick**, pastor, St. Nicholas Orthodox Church, San Anselmo, California
- ✦ **Paul Meyendorff**, Ph.D, Fr. Alexander Schmemmann Professor of Liturgical Theology, St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary, Crestwood, New York
- ✦ **Ivan Moody**, composer of music strongly influenced by early Orthodox chant, conductor and author
- ✦ **Hieromonk Jonah (Paffhausen)**, Abbot, Monastery of St. John of Shanghai and San Francisco, Point Reyes Station, California
- ✦ **Archimandrite Benjamin (Peterson)**, Dean, St. Herman's Seminary, Kodiak, Alaska, Orthodox Church in America
- ✦ **Nikola Resanovic**, D.M.A., composer of choral liturgical music, Professor of Music and Director of the Electronic Music Facility, University of Akron, Ohio
- ✦ **Fr. John Shimchick**, pastor, Church of the Holy Cross, Medford, New Jersey; editor, *Jacob's Well*
- ✦ **Jessica Suchy-Pilalis**, D.Mus., specialist in Byzantine chant, Associate Professor of Harp and Music Theory, The Crane School of Music, State University of New York College at Potsdam, New York ✦

Common Pitfalls of Liturgical Translation

by Elizabeth Theokritoff

Our liturgical texts are an immensely rich source of theology; they are our best possible guide to the mind of the Church and the way in which she interprets Scripture. Those of us used to worshipping in English enjoy a privilege not universal in the Orthodox world—that of hearing texts in a language readily comprehensible to us. On the other hand, we have the disadvantage that the texts we hear have been through at least one translation process and sometimes two (e.g. translations made from Slavonic). Some crucial points will have been lost in translation. Some important echoes (of Scripture, other liturgical texts) will have been obscured; in some cases, spurious echoes have been introduced. We shall look here at some examples of problematic liturgical translations, and the obstacles they can present to those who try to use them to deepen their theological understanding. Where I give my own translations of the texts, these are intended to give the sense of the original as literally as possible—not to be suitable for liturgical use.

Elusive Allusions

A prime example of echoes missed and spurious echoes introduced is the familiar and much-debated hymn to the Mother of God which declares, according to the prevailing OCA translation, “without defilement you gave birth to God the Word.” Now, no one disputes that the Mother of God is undefiled—and she is addressed as such in other texts. Here, however, the term is not *amiantos* (“undefiled”) but the adverb *adiaphthorōs*: “in a manner free from corruption,” i.e. with her virginity inviolate. The confusion caused by using the translation “without defilement” for *adiaphthorōs* or *aphthoros* (the two are often used interchangeably) comes across clearly in the Ninth Ode of the Great Canon. In the Eirmos of this Ode, *The Lenten*



Triodion speaks of “childbearing undefiled,” translating *aphthoros kyisis*. Unfortunately, on the next page St. Andrew declares, on the authority of the author of Hebrews, that “the marriage bed is undefiled” (where the adjective is an accurate translation of *amiantos*). On the basis of this affirmation, every childbearing within Christian marriage is “undefiled,” so that the term hardly serves as a useful designation for a virgin birth.

“Without defilement,” with its implied slur on marital relations, is a clear example of how not to translate *adiaphthorōs*. How one does translate it is a much thornier question. The primary meaning is clearly “in virginity.” “Inviolable” nicely renders the sense, together with the intended implication that sexual intercourse does involve a certain loss of integrity. On the other hand, *adiaphthorōs* contains a very important echo of the key theological term *phthora*, “corruption/decay”; “inviolable” loses this verbal echo (etymologizing translations such as “without corruption” preserve it, but at the cost of obscuring the primary meaning of the adverb here). *Phthora*—we might render it “innate instability”—

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is a basic given of the world as we know it. St. John of Damascus notes that the word has two senses. In one sense, Christ is subject to *phthora* in that He suffered hunger, thirst, and death. In the other sense, He is free from it, as the Holy One whom the Lord will not suffer to see *diaphthora* (Ps. 16:10; Acts 2:27).² Thus Christ’s Resurrection heralds the liberation of all creation from bondage to *phthora* (Rom. 8:21). The Fathers and hymnographers frequently point to the parallel between Resurrection from the sealed tomb and birth from a virgin womb. The adverb *adiaphthorōs*, with its connotations of freedom from decay/mutability, indicates how the virginal conception of Christ is intimately bound up with His identity as the one who will not see corruption. This is clearly expressed in the Christmas Kanon (First Kanon, Ode 6, Eirmos): “He came forth keeping [His Mother] inviolate [*aphthoron*]; for He preserved her that bore Him unharmed by the flux [*revisis*] to which He Himself was not subject.” The term *adiaphthorōs* applied to the Virgin’s birthgiving is not meant to imply that ordinary childbearing presupposes “defilement,” or even “corruption” in any moral sense; but it does imply that normal conception, involving as it does the destruction of a woman’s virginal state, is a manifestation of the instability which is the hallmark of our fallen existence.³

The Light of Knowledge

Another example of echoes missed occurs in the Christmas Troparion. This hymn tells us that Christ’s birth has caused the light of “knowledge” to “rise” (or “dawn”—it is the verb used of sunrise) upon the world. According to one translation, however, it “has shone to the world the light of wisdom.” Fr. Ephrem (Lash) has discussed several of the problems with this translation in a review of *The Living God*.⁴ Apart from being ungrammatical—you can shine a light *on* something, but not *to* it—this version quite obliterates the echo of the Canticle of Zachariah, which speaks of the Forerunner going “to give *knowledge* of salvation to [the Lord’s] people, through the tender mercy of our God whereby the *Dayspring* [*Orient, Sunrise*] from on high has visited us” (Luke 1:77–78). (The parallel between “light of *knowledge*” and “to *know* Thee, the Dayspring from on high” is already obscured in the Slavonic—“*svet razuma . . . Tebe vedeti*”—but there is little doubt that the parallel is intended.) If we look at the troparion in detail, we see that it has an illuminating chiasmic structure:⁵

- a. Thy Nativity, O Christ our God,
- b. has caused the light of *knowledge* to dawn upon the world:
- c. for by it, those who *worshipped* the stars
- d. were taught by a star
- c’. to *worship* Thee, the Sun of Righteousness
- b’. and to *know* Thee, the Dawn [*Orient, Dayspring*] from on high.
- a’. O Lord, glory to Thee.

The final phrase (a’) represents a *response* to Christ’s Nativity; compare the song of the angels (Luke 2:14) and also the beginning of the Christmas Kanon, “Christ is born, give glory.” The parallel between b and b’ is hard to render adequately in English: “caused to dawn” is *aneteile*, the verb corresponding to *Anatolē* (“Orient,” “Sunrise”). It is notable that the pivotal point of the troparion appears to be the teaching *by the star*: God’s creature, faithful to His purpose for it, directs those who try to worship it beyond itself to its Creator. It may not be too far-fetched to see a parallel with the Forerunner, who “was not the light, but came to bear witness to the light,” and whom the First Kanon for Theophany characterizes as the morning star, forerunner of the Sun (Ode 6, Eirmos): as already pointed out, his role is to go before the face of the Lord to give knowledge of salvation to His people.

The Canticle of Zachariah is probably the primary source for the combined imagery of “dawn” and “knowledge” found in the Christmas Troparion. But the expression “light of knowledge” itself does occur once in Scripture, and the context is highly significant. When Hosea is speaking of God’s longing for His people and of their continual infidelity (“there is no knowledge [*epignosis*] of God in the land,” Hos. 4:1), he exhorts Israel: “Sow for yourselves righteousness, reap the fruit of life, enlighten yourselves with the light of knowledge, seek the Lord” (Hos. 10:12, Septuagint; you will look for this text in vain in versions based on the Hebrew). The “light of knowledge” is intimately connected with recognizing, *acknowledging* the Lord, as the Magi would do many centuries later.

Furthermore, “knowledge,” *gnosis*, is a word with many significant resonances. The reference to *gnosis* at the Nativity is a clear snub to the Gnostics with their “knowledge falsely so called.” While their false *gnosis* is the property of an esoteric clique, the true *gnosis* shines like the rising sun upon all who do not shut their eyes to it. The first

Christmas Kanon (Ode 5, Eirmos) expresses the nature of this knowledge with greater precision when it speaks of our being “led to the light of the *knowledge of God* [*theognosia*].” The coming of Christ makes it possible for all to know, to “understand,” *who the true God is*. This theme takes us straight back to the writings of St. John, which are the main scriptural source for “knowledge” language: “The world has not *known* Thee, but I have *known* Thee, and these *know* that Thou hast sent me. I *made known* to them Thy name, and I *will make it known*” (John 17:25–26). Over and over again in the Gospel and Epistles of St. John, we are reminded that “knowledge of God” sums up the purpose of Christ’s coming: “This is eternal life, that they *know Thee*” (John 17:3).

Sacramental Allusions

Another category of echoes that risks being missed or obscured is the sacramental. For instance, “enlightenment” or “illumination” (*photismos*) is an ancient and extremely common term for baptism, and so scriptural references to light or enlightenment are often understood as baptismal allusions. Thus Psalm 33/34:5, 8 is taken to speak of the fundamental Mysteries of Christian life, baptism and the Eucharist: “Come unto Him and be enlightened, and your faces shall not be ashamed . . . taste and see that the Lord is good.” The RSV version of this passage, however, begins “Look to Him and be radiant . . .” Clearly, this is not helpful for Orthodox liturgical purposes. It makes it impossible to recognize the echoes of the Psalm that we find, for instance, in the First Kanon for Theophany (Ode 9.1), which explicitly relates these words from the Psalm to the institution of baptism:

O David, come in spirit to those who are being *enlightened* [i.e. baptized], and sing: *Come now unto God in faith, and be enlightened. This poor man, fallen Adam, cried and the Lord heard him. He has come and in the streams of Jordan has made new him who was subject to decay.*

At the same point in the previous Ode, the Melodist has used echoes of the same Psalm in a very interesting way: Christ says to John, “Cast aside all fear; be obedient to Me and *come unto Me* as to one who is *good* [*chrēstos*—as in Ps. 33/34:8],⁶ for such I am by nature.” Once we recognize that there is an ellipse here, and that “Come unto me” implies “. . . and be enlightened,” then it becomes apparent that John is to receive his own initiation

or “baptism” by the act of baptizing Christ.

A perennial problem with Psalm quotations, and Old Testament references more generally, is that so many theologically significant passages exhibit great discrepancies between the Septuagint text used by the Church and the Hebrew text on which most English translations are based. Staying with baptismal allusions, the RSV has at Psalm 4:6, “Lift up the light of Thy countenance upon us, O Lord”; the Septuagint has, “The light of Thy countenance has been marked/signed [*esēmeiothē*] upon us, O Lord.” What does it mean for a light to be “marked”? This is a classic case of an odd turn of phrase—the Septuagint is full of them—which spurred the Fathers to dig deeper in order to discover its meaning. What they found was the connection between the mystery of our enlightenment and the supreme “sign,” that of the Cross, with which we are marked out in this mystery as sheep of Christ’s flock. Hence the use of the Psalm verse as communion verse at the Exaltation of the Cross, and the echo of it in the kontakion for Theophany: “Thy light, O Lord, has been marked upon us.”

The frequent reminders of our “enlightenment” that the liturgical texts intend to give us are not a matter merely of literary interest. We have suggested that the early Church maintained, against the Gnostics, that all are offered *gnosis* through the Incarnation; in conversation with contemporary neognostics, it is equally important to be aware that “enlightenment” is something we have all received as baptized Christians. We have to work in order for the light to shine in us with its proper brightness, certainly; but nevertheless, it has been indelibly “marked upon us.”

Unfortunate Substitutions

In the process of reconstructing the original version of ancient texts, it is a well-known principle that an unusual expression or word risks being replaced by the copyist with something more familiar. And one can see a similar principle at work in the transmission of translated texts, once they are cut loose from their moorings in the original language: unusual expressions, which would once have been seen as significant, are removed as unnecessary obfuscation. An example may be found in versions of the Great Doxology that have “good will to/towards men” instead of “among men.” Good will *towards* someone can only be an attitude; but the liturgical use of this phrase in the Christmas services requires a form of words that can bear a very

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concrete sense: as we sing at Lauds, Mary has overturned the curse of Eve “because she has become the mother of the Good Pleasure [or ‘Good Will’—both translate *eudokia*] of the Father.” This personal understanding of “Good Will” puts quite a different complexion on the angels’ message to the shepherds. “Christ who is our peace” (cf. Eph. 2:14) is present on *earth*—the *divine Good Will* has appeared *among men*. (The would-be “inclusive” version of the Doxology which has “good will among all” has the effect of shifting the emphasis from humanity to universality, thus quite obscuring the parallelism between the latter two parts of the angels’ proclamation: *peace* on *earth*; *goodwill* among *earth dwellers*. But it is these two parts together that counterbalance the first part: Glory to *God* in the *highest*.)

Unintentional alterations in meaning sometimes occur where a faithful translation of the original sounds ungainly or is declared “unsingable.” This seems the most likely explanation for what has happened in the Troparion of the Cross, where more than one version has “*by the virtue of Thy Cross preserving Thy commonwealth/community*.” What the troparion says is simply, “*by Thy Cross*”—three monosyllables that risk getting lost if unstressed, and sound unattractive if stressed. But this hardly justifies such a pointed expansion of the phrase. There are texts that talk about the power or “virtue” of the Cross—but this is not one of them. Whether we like it or not, the emphasis of this troparion is less on the Cross *per se* than on divine favor towards the Christian empire.

Distorted Syntax

Distortions can also arise from the alteration of word order without good reason. Of course, changes in word order are often inevitable; but I have in mind some examples that have nothing to do with the demands of English syntax. Firstly, the version of the Christmas Kontakion that ends, “the pre-eternal God . . . a little child”—sung with the appropriate sentimental diminuendo. The pre-eternal God has indeed become a little child, and some hymns do focus on this aspect of the Incarnation—the wonder of God’s self-emptying. The trouble is that this particular hymn does not, which is why Romanos actually composed his refrain quite the other way round: “a newborn child, the pre-eternal God!” Both the Kontakion and the Oikos make the same point repeatedly in several different ways. “Earth offers a cave to the Unapproachable”; “Bethlehem has

thrown open Eden.” In the ordinary—a cave used as a stable, a Palestinian village—is revealed the transcendent and divine. Nothing remains simply what it appears. What has brought about this transformation? It is all dependent on one fundamental transformation of the everyday and earthly: the birth of a little child—something that happens several times a second, and is normally wonderful only to those closely involved—is revealed as nothing other than the appearance within His creation of the pre-eternal God.⁷

The second example of problems with word order comes from the Divine Liturgy, in the hymn “Only-begotten Son”—an extremely difficult text to put into English, consisting as it does of a fairly straightforward imperative (“Only-begotten Son . . . save us”) into which is sandwiched a whole series of participial phrases (or in English, relative clauses). The difficulty is insufficient excuse, however, for removing the striking juxtaposition which is the hallmark of this text: “. . . and being crucified, Christ God . . .” But at least one English version does just that, keeping back the appellation “Christ God” until near the end: “O Christ God, one of the Holy Trinity . . .” The probable reason for this is that the vocative in mid-sentence, much beloved of liturgical Greek, is felt to be awkward in English. The unfortunate effect, however, is to produce a distinctly Nestorian-sounding division between the divine and the human. We start with Christ’s divinity: but then it is as if the events pertaining to the man Jesus—birth, crucifixion, death—have to be got safely out of the way before we address Him again as “Christ God.” Needless to say, this is hardly the impression the hymn should be giving. Again, a chiasmic analysis of the text may clarify its intended message:

- a. Only-begotten Son and Word of God,
- b. who are immortal
- c. yet condescended for our salvation to be incarnate of the holy *Theotokos* and ever-virgin Mary,
- d. becoming man without change,
- c’. and were crucified, Christ God,
- b’. by death trampling down death:
- a’. who are one of the Holy Trinity, glorified with the Father and the Holy Spirit: save us!

The central point of the hymn, it thus appears, is the Chalcedonian affirmation that the Son became man “without change”—i.e. while remaining true God. Because of this incarnation without change,

His crucifixion is recognized as *the crucifixion of God*. But the Crucifixion (c') is simply the culmination of His condescension, His self-emptying in becoming incarnate (c): "Being found in human form, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross" (Phil. 2:8; the whole movement of this hymn is distinctly reminiscent of Phil. 2:5–11, but with a sharper Christological focus). Being in two natures ("becoming man without change"), he is not only immortal: He also dies, but His death is the destruction of death. The divine and the human, juxtaposed in b and c, are united "without division" in b' and c'.

Gratuitous Mystification

A final, rather different example of the hazards of translated texts may be called "gratuitous mystification." This is most likely the result of excessive literalism, including a desire to translate literally the components of compound words (if Cyril and Methodius could do it, why can't we?⁸), coupled with a conviction that the original meaning must be something too rarefied to be expressed in English as we know it. (A nonliturgical example of this is the habit of referring to iconography as *icon writing*—presumably on the grounds that *graphō* on its own means "write." By that logic, however, we ought to refer to other kinds of painting as "figure writing.") A prime liturgical example of the phenomenon is the adjective "life-creating." This is an attempt to translate *zōōpoios* (*zhivotvoriashchii*) as if it derived from *zoi* + *poiein*, "to make life." But as Fr. Ephrem (Lash) has pointed out, the sense is not to "make life" but to "make alive"—as the verb is translated in 1 Corinthians 15:22, for example—i.e. "to vivify or quicken." That this is the sense of the verb *zōōpoio* is abundantly clear wherever it is used in the New Testament: John 5:21, Romans 8:11, 2 Corinthians 3:6, 1 Timothy 6:13, 1 Peter 3:18, and so on. The adjective *zōōpoios* does not occur in Scripture, but it does appear in the Creed as an epithet of the Holy Spirit (where, mercifully, it has never to my knowledge been changed to "the Life-Creator"). "Life-creating" sounds sonorous and lofty, but it is far from clear what it might actually mean. Life is not an entity, a creature per se, but rather an attribute of certain creatures; and we do not generally speak of such attributes as being "created," but rather "bestowed," "given," "instilled." One might want to argue that God could properly be called "life-creating" because He is the author and source of life. But in what sense can it be

claimed that Christ's death, or the Cross, or the Mysteries, actually "create" life? Rather, they *bring to life* those subject to death; they *make alive* (in contrast to the Law and its works; cf. Gal. 3:21). And they do so by the power of the Spirit, the Giver of Life.

Conclusion

The purpose of these observations is not to pillory existing translations; I am keenly aware how much easier it is to criticize a translation than to propose a wholly satisfactory alternative. But I have tried to emphasize the importance of pursuing accuracy and precision in liturgical translations; and also, I hope, to show how much we gain from examining in detail what the texts we sing are trying to tell us. ✚

Elizabeth Theokritoff has a degree in Classics and Medieval and Modern Greek and a doctorate in liturgical theology from Oxford. She has served on the working group for liturgical translations in the Diocese of Sourozh (Russian Patriarchal Church in Great Britain). She has translated into English a number of modern Greek theological works, including the commentary on the Easter Canon from the Eortodromion of St. Nikodimos of the Holy Mountain, to be published by St. Tikhon's Press.

- 1 I am grateful to Carol Wetmore, Choir Director of Holy Trinity Church, Randolph, New Jersey, for checking and commenting on an earlier draft of this paper.
- 2 *On the Orthodox Faith* III.25 (72).
- 3 Another interesting perspective on the drastic but morally neutral implications of *phthora* is provided by the use of the term in Byzantine musical notation, where it denotes a sign of modulation. The *phthora* indicates that the original scale ceases to be; it becomes something else.
- 4 *Sourozh* 41 (August 1990), p. 44.
- 5 I.e. it is made up of parallel phrases centering on a pivotal theme, in such a way that each phrase following the pivotal point adds something to the earlier phrase it parallels. An excellent introduction to chiasmus in Scripture and liturgical texts is to be found in Fr. John Breck, *The Shape of Biblical Language* (Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1994).
- 6 Some Greek texts have *Christō*, "to Christ," instead of *chrēstō*, "to one who is good," which is supported by the Slavonic—a reminder that imperfect understanding of nuances and sacramental allusions in the text is not a problem confined to the English-speaking world.
- 7 Fr. John Breck (op. cit., pp. 294ff.) explores the chiasmic structure of this kontakion, showing that "a newborn babe, the God before time" in the refrain parallels "gives birth to the Superessential" in the first phrase. Once again, the movement is from the earthly to the transcendent—not vice versa.
- 8 The primary reason we cannot simply shape our own form of liturgical English in the mold of Greek or Slavonic is that the English we are working with, unlike ninth-century Slavonic, already has some five hundred years of history of liturgical or theological use—or over a thousand years, if you count Anglo-Saxon glosses of the Scriptures.

Distor-
tions can also
arise from the
alteration of
word order
without good
reason.

PSALM Survey

Preliminary Summary of Results

“As a PSALM worker, I think the organization has amazingly talented leaders, and its plans to restructure should yield more and committed ‘hands’ as well as brains.”
—Carol Wetmore

This past summer, PSALM began conducting its first organizational survey, soliciting feedback from and information about present and past members, as well as Orthodox clerics and church musicians from all jurisdictions.

Surveys were mailed (or e-mailed) to current PSALM members for 2001–2002, and the survey was announced to e-list subscribers. Surveys were also distributed at PSALM’s Annual Meeting in June and at the OCA All-American Council in July.

A detailed summary of the 58 surveys submitted to date can be found on the PSALM website (www.orthodoxpsalm.org). These responses came from individuals living in fifteen different U.S. states, and 85 percent said that they were either choir directors, choir members, or chanters. Over 50 percent belong to OCA parishes. Only 6 of the 58 respondents reported holding college degrees in Music or Music Education. Eighty-five percent of the respondents own computers.

Over 90 percent said that responses are sung in their parish by a choir, and 55 percent sing from a choir loft. Use of Byzantine chant or Slavic-based chant/ music was divided evenly, many parishes using both. Ninety-five percent of the respondents use and have a need for four-part mixed-voice music for Liturgy and feast days. Sixty percent use primarily the English language in services.

The needs identified as most urgent, in priority order, were:

- ✦ Vocal technique training
- ✦ Better choral singing techniques
- ✦ Parish education regarding church singing
- ✦ Easy-to-read, professionally published music
- ✦ Training for church music leaders

Preferences for topics to be addressed in PSALM Notes (in order of most preferred to least) were:

- ✦ Hymnography (background)
- ✦ Worship—theology, structure, history
- ✦ Definitions of liturgical and musical terms
- ✦ Structure and analysis of Octoechos
- ✦ Basic music theory

The survey results compiled thus far will inform decisions made by the Board of Directors and staff as we begin to develop a strategic plan for the next five years.

In order to give more individuals an opportunity to participate in the survey, we are extending the deadline to January 31, 2003. We will recompile and publish the final survey results in March, 2003.

We are grateful to all those who have taken the time to complete the survey already. If you have not done so yet, we encourage your participation and value your input. You may obtain a copy of the survey by downloading it from the PSALM website, or by sending an e-mail requesting the form to VYSheets@aol.com.

Valerie Yova Sheets, Executive Director

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With the sheer volume of singing for which choir members, chanters, and directors are responsible, what tips can you give for vocal survival during intense periods of singing, e.g. Holy Week, and for maintenance of general vocal health?

Mark: The key to surviving Holy Week begins with the basics: good posture, expanded breathing, and abdominal or diaphragmatic support. Those things alone will help a voice sing well for hours at a time over the course of many days. Not breathing in such a way as to expand the abdominal muscles and fill the lungs completely with air, and disengaging the muscles that should support the flow of air in the exhalation, puts too much pressure on the vocal cords themselves, which will then wear out shortly.

Maintaining vocal health during Holy Week also includes maintaining physical health. A regimen of vitamins, supplements, exercise, and so forth is a necessary element of singing. One must think of singing as a physical, even athletic, activity, for which the singer must be well conditioned. This builds stamina for the demands of Holy Week and throughout the year.

Alice: I would add that it is critical to keep the voice hydrated, especially after singing for two or three hours. Many exhausted, hoarse voices can be traced to dehydration. Drink plenty of water.

Keeping the voice hydrated is particularly difficult during fasting periods. If we make a point of hydrating fully when we are at liberty to drink, because of fasting requirements, we can help our situation. It is easy when we are tired to forget to drink. We have to make a specific point of doing so. When singers are not restricted from drinking of water, it is better to drink throughout the day prior to singing a three-hour matins or vigil service. However, since we may be prohibited from doing the ideal, we need to do the next best thing, which is to drink as much water as we can, when we can!

Attention to hydration is important not just during Holy Week and other extended fasting periods, but even on an average Saturday evening in preparation for Liturgy the following morning.

Mark: Also, choir members and chanters should make sure they are singing in the proper range or

tessitura for their voices. Singing out of range occasionally to help out a weak section is fine, but for multiple services, the voice will weaken due to the strain and eventually give out.

One thing that helps a great deal during Holy Week is if singers, during what little spare time they have, take the music home and just read through it. Not sing it, as the voice needs to rest, but simply read over the texts and look over the music, so that they seem familiar when sung.

Alice: We should also note that eating certain foods can have a detrimental effect on some voices. Many of these we abstain from during fasting periods anyway, but they bear mentioning, in particular chocolate and dairy products—especially heavy creams—which can thicken the mucus that protects the vocal folds. Coffee, tea, cola, alcohol, and certain medications can also exacerbate dehydration and therefore require the singer to drink additional fluids.

Another important point is to take time to warm up the voice carefully, particularly if you are prone to hoarseness and vocal exhaustion. Taking five to fifteen minutes to slowly activate the vocal mechanism can save many a voice.

Mark: Finally, many church singers only put forth minimal vocal effort to produce and sustain the maximum results. Singing—alone or in a choir—is active work: a singer not only needs efficiently to work the technique of the voice, but also to engage in the technique of the ensemble: listening carefully, breathing with the ensemble on the conductor's upbeat, watching the conductor carefully, looking ahead in the music, blending one's own voice with the voices around one, listening to the other sections, and so forth. Singing, in fact, is a 300% activity: 100% vocal production; 100% listening; 100% watching.

But here's the thing: the more one works like this while singing, the easier it is to sustain the process.

Alice: I couldn't agree more with Mark's excellent statement that singing takes 300% effort! This is the way to survive. It is physically more exhausting, but vocally exhilarating. When you sing in this way your voice doesn't get tired, and the services are sung more beautifully, with each one building on the previous one! ✦

by Mark Bailey
& Alice Hughes

Ten Commandments for Vocal Health

Thou shalt maintain good posture and breath support whenever thou singest.

Thou shalt get plenty of rest and maintain a healthy diet and exercise regime to build stamina.

Thou shalt drink plenty of water, especially after prolonged singing during fasting periods.

Thou shalt sing in the proper range or tessitura for thy voice.

Thou shalt warm up thy voice before arriving at church.

Thou shalt not shout, scream, whisper, or talk for prolonged periods of time.

Thou shalt not smoke or inhale secondhand smoke or other pollutants.

Thou shalt not drink caffeine or alcohol, as both are dehydrating.

Thou shalt not eat or drink dairy products, chocolate, or other foods that adversely affect the vocal mechanism.

Thou shalt actively engage while singing with a 300 percent focus:
100 percent vocal production, 100 percent listening,
100 percent watching the conductor.

Fulfilling the High Calling of the Church Singer

by Pauline N. Costianes

Because music was an essential part of all liturgical functions, those who were members of the choir considered their task a high calling; it was truly their highest vocation.

In the Orthodox Church, our music is our worship. It is not merely ornamentation or decoration. Therefore, those who sing in holy services are not just musicians who sing to “set a mood” or to “make the service pretty”; rather, they are leading the congregation in worship with their sung prayer.

*Those who were appointed to the special body of singers, the choir, obviously had to be skilled in the art of singing and thoroughly trained in the knowledge of the sacred leitourgia. Because music was an essential part of all liturgical functions, those who were members of the choir considered their task a high calling; it was truly their highest vocation. They undertook it with all the seriousness and dignity that the word “vocation” originally conveyed.*¹

In the early Church, the singers were among the orders of clergy and were tonsured to set them apart. They stood to the right and left of the altar in special raised areas called *klirosy*, as if to show that they were a step above the faithful, but still a step below the altar. They were to lead the congregation in singing at those times when the congregation was supposed to sing. An Orthodox priest, unlike his Roman Catholic counterpart, may not celebrate the Liturgy by himself. For Christ Himself said, “Where two or three are gathered, there I am also.” There must be at least one other person to sing the responses or the Liturgy cannot take place. As Bishop Basil Essey has said:

*You are as important to the parish as is the holy table itself. As there can be no Liturgy without the holy table, there can be no Liturgy without you. This is not a compliment to increase your pride, but rather to put a little fear and awe in you, so you know what your responsibilities are.*²

Thus, being in the choir is not merely a hobby, something fun to do instead of “just being in the con-

gregation,” something you do when you make the time, or when you feel like it. Bishop Basil goes on:

*It is first and foremost a duty, a duty of those to whom God has given musical talents. It is sinful, in my opinion, for someone not to sing who has been given the gift to sing. Sinful! You join the angels and do that which the angels do perpetually. That’s not an interest, avocation, or a hobby; it’s a duty. Angels were created to serve and praise, and you have been given voices for the same purpose.*³

Singers must also see their ministry as part of their personal spirituality. Everything in the Church is a journey, a preparation. The cycles of feasts and fasts demonstrate this. Just as a priest does his *proskomedia* or acts of preparation before the Liturgy, so must we.

We must prepare both spiritually and musically. Not only should we take good care of the instrument that God has given us by keeping ourselves in a good state of health, but we should make sure that our spiritual health is in order too. As always, Satan just loves to throw roadblocks in the way of those who strive to serve God. Three particular sins that come to mind in the context of a music ministry in the Church are: (1) lack of attention during services and rehearsals, (2) lateness at services and rehearsals, and (3) absence from services and rehearsals.

Lack of attention

Yes, we are only human, and yes, our senses lead us astray with silly little things (read C. S. Lewis’ *The Screwtape Letters*, which nails this on the head perfectly). But nothing in this world is easy. We have to work for everything in this life, and attaining the Kingdom of God is the work of eternity, unlike all other work we do here on earth. We need to strive earnestly to focus on this heavenly task. Mark Bailey notes that:

Worship . . . is not simply a prescribed religious gathering that happens week after week, where some things change and some remain the same. It is a cycle, a progression—indeed, a journey. And Great Lent is the season within that journey, by design, that helps remove us from our daily distractions and preoccupations, as well as from those things that have become routine.⁴

Whereas, in this particular article, Mr. Bailey was focusing on the journey to Pascha, our whole church year is a journey to Pascha, with every service we do being special and deserving of our utmost attention and care. We cannot rush into church five minutes before Liturgy, having raced all the way, and expect that we can leave the world and enter the Eternal Liturgy with any kind of attention. One needs a period of time for preparation and quietness, to be able to properly focus on the task at hand. Most choir directors have a period of “warm-up” prior to any service. Not only does this help prepare your physical instrument, your voice, but it also reminds you that you are about to join the angels, who constantly sing around the throne of God. If the choir members are acting as leaders in worship, they must set an example of creating a prayerful atmosphere of worship, by keeping an attitude of reverence and humility from the moment they awake on Sunday morning until the Liturgy is finished.

Lateness

Except for that unexpected emergency such as car trouble, construction you weren't aware of, or the kid/cat/dog getting sick while you are getting ready, there is no excuse for being late. It is terribly disrespectful to your fellow singers, your choir director, and your priest, and dare I say that it is a blasphemy to God and all those who are singing the ongoing heavenly Liturgy? There are consequences for arriving late to work (you eventually get fired), to a doctor's appointment (make another appointment or pay for the missed appointment), or to a movie or play (the glares from the people you're pushing past to get to your seat). What do you suppose the consequences are for not being on time for the “work of eternity”? Bishop Basil Essey states:

We should give thanks that God has been pleased to call us who were created from the dust of this earth to participate in the heavenly Liturgy and to offer up praises with His angels to join in the perpetual hymn of “Holy, Holy, Holy.” We jump in [to the eternal Liturgy] and we jump out. Some of us jump in on time and some of

us jump in . . . late. In my opinion, being in church for that first “Amen” is a sign, an indication of one's virtue. And where humility is, indeed, a virtue, its opposite is a sin. The sin is not disturbing other people. The other people in the church are not the object of our worship. It is rude, but not necessarily sinful, to disturb other people. But it is sinful to be presumptuous and prideful that one can jump in and sing with thousands of archangels and ten thousands of angels at one's own whim.⁵

Those who are habitually late need to repent of this sin and make an effort to (1) understand why they are always late, and (2) do what is required to change that behavior. In most cases, it is a matter of getting out of the house 15 to 20 minutes earlier. That's not such a huge sacrifice.

Absences

We cannot take our calling seriously if we are only “Sunday Christians.”

All members of the choir should consider it their duty to be present at all the services of the Church . . . it is clear that church singers must be zealous lovers of the Church and its sacred services. They must develop a sense of values in which the Church is first and highest and most precious, so that they are able to lay aside all other considerations and be present on every Lord's Day, at every Vigil or Great Vespers, and every Great Feast. If this is “unrealistic,” then the question must be asked, why was it possible for Orthodox believers in cultures where working hours were much longer and the word “leisure” was unknown, to come to every Saturday evening Vigil, every Sunday Liturgy, and every Great Feast? The problem in our culture is surely not time, but values.⁶

Rehearsals prepare us for those holy services, and should be taken just as seriously. Really learning and internalizing the words of the hymns helps to free us up from merely reading the music and words, so that we are able to pray them.

Singers need to prepare repeatedly for their task if it is to be fruitful and worthy. It is a great mistake for those who have sung in church choirs for many years to assume that by virtue of “tenure” they need no rehearsals, or that they need not prepare themselves spiritually. Every work, if it is to be a fulfillment, requires preparatory effort.⁷

As we can see from the previous pages, the Church herself and her leaders give us all the background instructions for our duties as church musicians. All

If the choir members are acting as leaders in worship, they must set an example of creating a prayerful atmosphere of worship, by keeping an attitude of reverence and humility from the moment they awake on Sunday morning until the Liturgy is finished.

choir members should be given a set of rules and guidelines for their ministry. Even more than any secular singing group, those of us in this sacred music ministry need guidelines and structure, so that there are clear boundaries, clear expectations, and no misunderstandings. Thus freed from any ambiguity, we can all move forward in our work for the Lord. And it goes without saying that any guidelines for choir membership need the full sup-

port of the parish priest. (See below for a sample set of guidelines.) ✦

- 1 *Sacred Music: The Choir—Tract II*, Department of Liturgical Music of the OCA, 1977.
- 2 *The Ministry of Church Singers—A Lecture Given by His Grace Bishop Basil Essey*, 1995.
- 3 *Ibid.*
- 4 *A Lenten Look at Liturgical Music*—from the St. Vladimir's Seminary website, Mark Bailey, 2000.
- 5 Bishop Basil, *op. cit.*
- 6 *Sacred Music: The Choir*.
- 7 *Ibid.*

Guidelines for Membership in the (Parish Name) Church Choir

Some parishes will have a Choir Appreciation Sunday, in which the choir is blessed for another year's service—usually around October 1, St. Romanos' Day.

- ✦ If you have chosen to accept the calling to be a church singer, you must be willing to accept that this is, indeed, a ministry. Unlike any other volunteer job in the parish, including the Parish Council, this responsibility must take priority over other parish responsibilities.
- ✦ Those who are interested in choir membership need to approach the choir director. A singer in the music ministry must be able to match pitch, and an ability to read music is very helpful. Any visitors must approach the choir director prior to services if they wish to sing. Choir members must direct any inquiring singer to the attention of the director. Please do not invite people to “join in and sing” on your own.
- ✦ The choir director is the choir master—the master of the choir. This is not said to be dictatorial in any way. A choir is not a democracy. The Church has a hierarchy, and as the choir is part of the Church, it does too. In order for things to run “decently and in good order,” as St. Paul says, the choir must have one leader, and that leader is the director.
- ✦ Lateness is not acceptable behavior in the choir. If there is an emergency of some sort on occasion, that is understandable. Warm-ups are a half-hour prior to the service, and you are expected to be present at those in order to prepare spiritually and physically.
- ✦ Attendance at rehearsals and services is not optional. It is not for you to decide whether or not you “need” to be at rehearsal. Your presence supports the other singers and contributes to the net effect. If you are going to be absent from service or rehearsal, please either call or e-mail the choir director. He/she deserves to be notified, as it may affect what is rehearsed at that particular practice. It is a sign of respect for your director and the other singers, and of your seriousness about your ministry.
- ✦ In order to be considered a member of the choir, you must attend 75 percent of the rehearsals and services. If there is a problem with work or something else that prevents you from attending at least that much, perhaps you need to take a leave of absence from the choir until your situation is resolved and you can participate fully and responsibly.
- ✦ As would be expected according to the seriousness of the calling of a music minister, choir members will conduct themselves in a respectful and prayerful way while in church. Talking during the service should be restricted to any question about the service itself. Socializing during the service, especially during the Epistle, Gospel, or sermon, is not acceptable; please save this for the coffee hour. Remember where you are.
- ✦ “When Mother Nature calls, there is no wrong number.” Except for these calls, choir members are expected to be present from the opening exclamation to the closing “Amen.” Flitting in and out of the choir is distracting and disrespectful for all involved. When you are singing in a choir loft, your behavior should be no different than if you were right up in the front of the church, in view of the entire congregation.
- ✦ While it is wonderful and necessary to “train up a child in the way he/she should go,” the choir is not a playroom. Children who are actively involved in learning to sing the service or who are able to sit quietly are, of course, welcome in the choir. Children who require constant parental supervision are, unfortunately, a distraction to the choir and therefore to the worship. They should sit during the service with a grandparent, godparent, relative, or friend.

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November 10, 2002, 5:00 p.m.

***Spirit of Orthodoxy Choir Benefit Concert
for IOCC***

*St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church, Blue Point,
NY. Tickets are \$10 and can be bought at the door.*

Directions to the church can be found on www.goarch.org

*in the parish listing section. The concert is sponsored by
St. John the Theologian Orthodox Church (OCA) in Shirley,
NY. For more information, contact Fr. John Kefalas,
631-363-6450.*

CALENDAR

