

# PSALM

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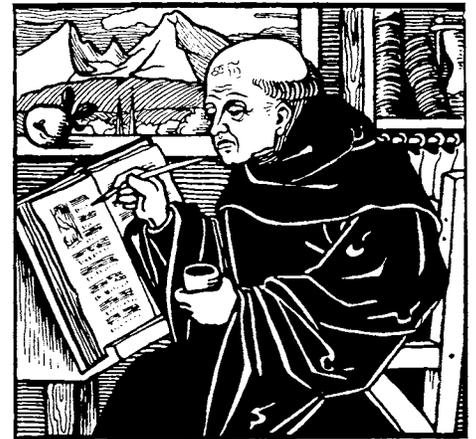
N \* O \* T \* E \* S

Winter 2008

## Historical Models of the Patronage of the Liturgical Arts

by Rev. Deacon Nicholas Denysenko

Evaluating and selecting new music presents a unique challenge to the contemporary Orthodox choir director. In an ideal situation, the conductor will have the opportunity to review new and fresh compositions for the weekly services and liturgical seasons at least semi-annually. The challenge is not, however, limited to deciding which settings provide the best fit for the church's liturgical ethos and the choir's musical competency. Both finding and acquiring the music can often be problematic.



Liturgical music holds a unique position among the various areas of liturgical art in that new works of art cannot as a rule be purchased directly from a self-proprietor. Architects, iconographers, and tailors frequently sell their products and services directly to church institutions and professionals. As a rule, however, musicians publish their works in order to connect to marketing vehicles and thus gain access to a broad audience. The church choir director usually peruses single compositions or collections organized by liturgical units or seasons at music stores, music events, or through direct contact with a publisher (most often via a website).

This unique selection and decision process presents many subtle perils to both the inquisitive choir director and the composer. The following hypothetical situation illustrates the ethical and practical consequences a particular decision can have for the parties involved.

Let's say the choir director at St. Mary's parish in Anywhere, USA, has run across a new setting for the

### Contents

Music .....	7	Musical Education of Children in	LSS 2008 .....	12
Translating Liturgical Texts .....	8	the Church .....	2006 PSALM Conference DVDs ..	14

**Instead of growing, the liturgical arts of the Church are steeped in repetition and aridity, with no new expressive elements.**

Eucharistic Canon that provides a perfect fit for both her parish and her choir. The price for a single copy is \$1.75, but she can purchase multiple copies in packs for a discount. Given the size of her choir, she can make the purchase for a grand total of \$29.75 (not including shipping). Before making the purchase, however, she needs to receive approval from the choir council for the expenditure. The choir treasurer tells her that the choir's budget is entirely devoted to an upcoming event, and asks her if she can buy one copy and then photocopy as many as the choir needs. The director, not wanting to make a fuss over a thirty-dollar purchase, decides to take an even better course: print the PDF file of the score from the publisher's website, and then make the sufficient number of copies. Upon attempting this, she discovers, to her dismay, that the publisher instead sends her browser directly to an order page, where she can enter her credit card number or the church's account number for purchase. Feeling frustrated, the director decides to wait on ordering the music until the choir budget has sufficient funds.

At first glance, we may question the sobriety of this situation. Many Orthodox parishes and people have a developed sense of stewardship, and work diligently at supporting the various ministries within their parishes. Unfortunately, despite the copyright warnings appearing on published settings, many parishes illegally copy them for liturgical and paraliturgical use.<sup>1</sup> The reasons for this are various, but they are all rooted in the same issues: a lack of appreciation for the integral role liturgical music plays in church life, and a lack of knowledge of the arduous work that is put into creating and expressing this art.

The entire picture must be presented in order to understand the depth of the present problem, and this can be done through our hypothetical example. The director's decision to delay purchase affected the parish, the choir, the publisher, and the composer. The parish lost an opportunity to have its liturgical life enriched through a new and creative artistic expression of a sacred text. The choir lost an opportunity to expand its repertoire and deepen its musical and spiritual experience. The publisher and the composer lost the opportunity to make a sale, negatively affecting their livelihoods and capacity to invest in new opportunities to contribute creatively to the Church's expression of thanksgiving in worship.

When this scenario is magnified into a vicious cycle, the consequences for the Church are severe. Instead of growing, the liturgical arts of the Church

are steeped in repetition and aridity, with no new expressive elements.

The solution to this problem can be identified by combing the Church's tradition for models that reveal a dynamic dialogical relationship between the Church and the arts that express her theology. Tradition cannot, however, be understood as mere repetition of past models. A preferred definition has been provided by the renowned liturgical scholar Robert Taft:

*Tradition is not history, nor is it the past. Tradition is the church's self-consciousness now of that which has been handed on to it not as an inert treasure, but as a dynamic principle of life. It is the church's contemporary reality understood genetically, in continuity with that which produced it.*<sup>2</sup>

This article will propose not that churches implement these particular models of patronage of the liturgical arts, but rather that they should adopt a mindset common to all of them for the creation of effective contemporary solutions.

We can glean a common understanding of church stewardship from the examination of three distinct historical models of the patronage of church ministries. The first is the monastic model of the development of ecclesiastical poetry in Byzantium. The second is the emergence of lay brotherhoods in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Ukraine. Finally, we will look at both Western and Eastern modern paradigms of laity-led initiatives in church stewardship. This will lead us to an underlying theology of stewardship particular to the liturgical arts.

## **The Liturgical Arts in the Life of the Church**

Before proceeding to the historical models, we need to define the place of the liturgical arts in the life of the Church. The liturgical movement of the twentieth century common to West and East included many fruitful theological definitions. The phrase *lex orandi, lex credendi*, an abbreviation of the longer *ut legem credendi lex statuat supplicandi* (the law of prayer grounds the law of belief) ascribed to Prosper of Aquitaine, has become foundational for all liturgical work.<sup>3</sup>

Perhaps the greatest contribution to the ministry of the Church has been a return to the sources, a focus on understanding how the Church's identity and life are formed and shaped by her prayers. This experience is extended to the members of the Church in their mission to and life within the

world. The *lex orandi* of the Church shapes not only the *lex credendi*, but also the *lex vivendi*, the life relation of the Church's liturgical experience.<sup>4</sup>

The *lex orandi* of the Church is not limited to prayer texts one reads by simply picking up a service book or liturgical text. Our worship experience has been manifestly shaped by the entire liturgical context processed by our senses. The incense, processional movement, iconography in harmony with church architecture, and sacred texts proclaimed through recitation or musical chant add significant colors to our worship experience and play enormously important roles in shaping our personal and communal identities as Christians who are members of the Body of Christ.

Any person can sit in a chair and simply read the text of Antiphon XV from the Holy Friday Matins with Passion Gospels.<sup>5</sup> Anyone who has experienced this text in a church on Holy Thursday evening, with a solemn chant setting and procession with the Cross, censing, and prostrations, has a significantly different understanding of the meaning of the event. This example shows that text and context have an important dialogical relationship in liturgy, and the liturgical arts are integral to the shaping of the setting's context.<sup>6</sup>

### **The Monastic Model in Byzantium**

Modest examples from the history of the Byzantine Liturgy help to illustrate in practical terms how the liturgical arts have helped shape the Church's understanding of the faith. Classical monastic prayer is marked by its simplicity and emphasis on continual prayer through the recitation of psalms. The importation of ecclesiastical poetry was resisted in many monastic communities of both East and West for the first few centuries of the Church's existence. Theological controversy led to changes in liturgical practices.

The Arians were notorious for holding liturgical processions that included hymns professing their heterodoxy.<sup>7</sup> Organized stational processions with hymnody captured the attention of the Byzantine public and proved to be a thorn in the side of the ruling bishops. In the late fourth century, St. John Chrysostom, as Archbishop of Constantinople, responded to this phenomenon by setting up a new initiative employing the same tactics as the Arians (i.e., stational processions) with short, ecclesiastical hymns elucidating the Orthodox faith. The appearance of refrains such as "Most holy Theotokos, save us"<sup>8</sup> and doxological formulas that completed prayer

collects are attributable to responses to heresy.<sup>9</sup> These are some of the first examples of the emergence of poetic hymns, songs, and refrains being used within the *lex orandi* of the Church in Byzantium.

The musically elongated homiletic kontakion<sup>10</sup> and its successor, the canon, comprise liturgical elements that are related to theological controversy. The reforms of St. Theodore the Studite left a permanent mark on Byzantine worship through the importation of monks from the monastery of St. Sabbas in Palestine.<sup>11</sup> Saints Theodore and John of Damascus led the monastic defense of the use of icons in worship, and St. Theodore wanted to employ the strong tradition of ecclesiastical poetry<sup>12</sup> flourishing in Palestine. He believed that this poetry, the canon in particular, was the most effective vehicle for defending the Orthodox faith against heresy.

Contemporary Orthodox musicians can see the names of the fathers of this legacy simply by opening the Festal Menaion and reading stichera and troparia attributed to the likes of John of Damascus, Germanus, Andrew of Crete, and (of course) Romanos. While we may take their work for granted, their contributions through the medium of the liturgical arts did much more than simply provide nice music. They left an indelible mark on the liturgical practice and theological confession of the Church that remains to this day. The relationship between ecclesiastical poetry, music, and the veneration of icons shows how three important liturgical arts have historically acted in harmony to profess the faith of the Church in her *lex orandi*.

The above examples illustrate the important historical role played by the liturgical arts, but also reveal the ability of church leaders to recognize and support them. St. Theodore's role in defending Orthodoxy against the iconoclasts was reflective of the rise of monastic communities to prestige in Byzantine society. By bringing a living artistic tradition to Constantinople from Palestine, he served as an active patron of the liturgical arts and facilitated the spread and growth of this tradition throughout Byzantium. The composition of ecclesiastical poetry and its musical execution was thus advocated in the thriving life of a prestigious Byzantine monastery.

Monastic life was frequently aided by the material support of lay patrons, indirectly facilitating the proliferation of the liturgical arts. Monasteries that enjoyed a solid public reputation in liturgical practice, fidelity to their rule, and an overall positive presence in the local region tended to attract visitors who would leave gifts behind.<sup>13</sup> The patron might

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expect that his name would appear on some monument within the church, calling into question whether his participation was for the sake of charity or in the hopes of gaining intercession for his sins. Evidence from such reciprocal relationships between monasteries and lay patrons reveals that some level of appreciation for the liturgical arts served as motivation for patrons to support the work of the monasteries.<sup>14</sup>

### **Ukrainian Brotherhoods**

A completely different chapter in Orthodox history provides another example of the importance of the arts. The Orthodox Church in Ukraine was in a difficult political position in the sixteenth century. Most of Ukraine was under the rule of the Polish throne, and the Roman Catholic Church in Poland was responding to the consequences of the Protestant Reformation. The Protestant movement progressed in Polish society by stressing quality education and the use of the vernacular in worship. The Jesuits, who arrived in 1564, responded to this challenge by appropriating popular Protestant practices, including the tradition of religious songs called *kancjonale*.<sup>15</sup> They also took advantage of the advent of the Baroque style of music cultivated by Polish nobles, who sent their children to Italian schools, thus absorbing elements of musical culture from the Italian Renaissance.<sup>16</sup> A strong educational system and an aesthetically pleasant genre of church music emerged from this phenomenon.

The Orthodox nobility in Ukraine were familiar with Polish culture through their societal status, and many left the Orthodox Church for Rome, leading to the Union of Brest in 1596.<sup>17</sup> The Orthodox response to this crisis was led by noble laymen, who organized into brotherhoods to maintain the faith on their native soil. The brotherhoods, aware of the appeal of the exciting new musical styles, concentrated on education with specific emphasis on music, leading to the introduction into the Church of a new tradition of part-singing.<sup>18</sup> It was natural for them to teach the new Western-influenced musical style they themselves had learned, in order to provide a viable and attractive liturgical alternative for faithful who might be tempted to abandon the Orthodox Church.

The history of Russian and Ukrainian church music was permanently influenced by the introduction of Western styles and part-singing, and has been well-documented by others. The educational model established by the brotherhoods continued to

be carried on in Russia, as Patriarch Nikon and Tsar Alexis imported Ukrainian singers from Kiev to Moscow to introduce new genres of liturgical music to the Muscovite portion of the Church. This led to the establishment of schools and academies in the Russian Empire, and the education of gifted musicians (such as Dmitry Bortniansky) in foreign schools.<sup>19</sup>

The key element of importance in regards to the brotherhoods is the fact that they responded to a crisis on their own. The movement was initiated by lay people, since the Orthodox Church in Ukraine had no substantial hierarchical leadership from the time of the Union until new hierarchs were consecrated by Patriarch Theophanes of Jerusalem in 1620. The brotherhoods also recognized the importance of the medium of liturgical music. Music was used by the Protestants to communicate their message in the vernacular, and was similarly employed by the Jesuits in their response. The Orthodox were able to sustain and enliven both the *lex orandi* and the *lex vivendi* of the local church by cultivating the liturgical arts and facilitating new and creative expressions of the faith that related to their surrounding culture. The brotherhoods thus established an important model of lay patronage of the liturgical arts. In doing so, they displayed an understanding of the importance of the arts in the life of the Church.

### **The Twentieth-Century Liturgical Movement**

The previous examples may seem to be irrelevant to the current situation of Orthodoxy in America. They arose in specific historical, theological, and ecclesiological contexts. One could argue that church life is no longer affected by imperial and aristocratic intrigues. The absence of these entities naturally entails the absence of their financial support. There is no longer an Emperor Constantine to initiate a building program of churches based on holy places in Jerusalem, nor is there a Justinian who can allocate the best architects and craftsmen for the building of another Hagia Sophia. The Church also finds herself in an increasingly prophetic situation, with the need to define her distinct identity in the midst of religious pluralism and confusion. Within this context, Orthodoxy needs to develop a new model for supporting the liturgical arts for the proliferation of the Church's tradition.

The twentieth century marked the beginning of the liturgical movement, an era of significant change for both East and West. The liturgical move-

ment generated serious interest in making progress towards a more traditional sense of ecclesial participation for the Roman Catholic Church, culminating in the Constitution of the Sacred Liturgy at Vatican II. In the 1920s, a small group of art professionals established the Liturgical Arts Society.<sup>20</sup> The chief purpose of this group was to encourage new styles in architecture and worship space that would facilitate full ecclesial participation in worship. This would in turn create work opportunities for member professionals. The Society's main vehicle of communication was the journal *Liturgical Arts*. It served as an important voice for professionals and the laity by engaging many clergy in the discourse on good liturgy and by carving a niche for the important role of the arts in the Constitution.<sup>21</sup> While the Society emphasized art and architecture, the focus on education, appropriation of a vehicle of communication, and engagement of church leaders in discourse is notable. This legacy provides a positive example of the good influence the gathering, cooperation, and educational endeavors of liturgical arts professionals can have on the life of the Church.

After the Russian Revolution, the Orthodox churches in the West faced the prospect of self-preservation. A new understanding of stewardship was necessary for the survival of the community itself. The people of the community shared the responsibility of raising the necessary resources to furnish their churches and provide the necessities for liturgical celebration. Churches adopted creative methods of fundraising, including bake sales, ethnic festivals and bazaars, and designation of special funds. The funds might be allocated for the commissioning of an architect to design a new church or an iconographer to paint new icons.<sup>22</sup> New vestments for clergy and altar servers have been commissioned, though not always at the expense of the parish.

Icons and worship space comprise the most basic visible essential for a church. Most Orthodox cannot imagine a church without these, so the investments are made through designated funds or even private donations. These general examples show that parishes have gradually adapted to their new situation in North America and continue to grow in their understanding of the need to support the liturgical arts.<sup>23</sup>

### **Toward a New Model of Patronage**

This brief overview of particular models of the patronage of the liturgical arts in the Church's history shows how necessary it is to cultivate the creative

process for the liturgical arts of music and poetry. They enliven the *lex orandi* of the Church and allow it to enable the *lex vivendi* that sustains Christians on their daily journey. Churches and individuals have shown that they understand the need to cultivate their worship space and iconography, especially since those creative processes are visible to everyone.

This brings to mind the hypothetical example of the difficult purchase decision the choir director faced at the beginning of this article. It may be helpful to illustrate in some detail what a parish is paying for when it makes an investment in church music and musicians.

A talented musician receives an education and gains competency in both liturgical theology and music, providing him or her with the tools to create new music for a church context. He or she spends time in the creative process making sure the music delivers the unique message embedded in the text and context of the Church. A portion of the sale of the score goes to the composer for his or her contribution.

The publisher employs acquisitions editors who learn the needs of the Church and seek to acquire compositions to fit these needs. They may even commission reputable composers to fill gaps in their music lines. They also employ musical editors, who make sure the music is accurate, readable, and correctly typeset for execution by choir and conductor. A portion of the sale goes to these editors.

The publisher pays a printer to print and bind the scores, and a shipping company to ship them. Marketing personnel determine the best vehicles to promote the music so that church choir directors can locate it, and may also invest in a performance group to create a recording that demonstrates the setting and helps a director decide whether or not it will fit a given choir. They also make sure the pricing is affordable for churches. Because music is used by groups, the pricing tends to be based on the purchase of multiple copies. A portion of the price pays for these costs as well. All of these publishing functions<sup>24</sup> rely on one another, and they are critical for the creative process to be initiated, sustained, and refreshed.

Good liturgical music that changes in accordance with the Church's tradition to fit the needs of different communities in varying contexts is indisputably critical for the confession of the Orthodox faith, as shown above. Throughout history, different models of the patronage of the arts have been crafted by visionary leaders who were responding to serious

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challenges in the ministry of the Church. In each case, lay or monastic leaders appreciated the unique contribution made by the fine arts in the life of the Church and took proactive steps to ensure its viability through the establishment of education, vehicles of communication, and financial support.

This legacy leads to two concrete steps that can be taken to elevate the patronage of the liturgical arts in the current context. First, professional liturgists and musicians must take the initiative in educating the Church on the role of the liturgical arts in the *lex orandi*, *lex credendi*, and *lex vivendi* of the Church. Many leaders have already taken strong first steps in initiating this process through publishing and the organization of conferences and events.

Second, parishes and individuals need to take the next step by providing professionals and prospective

liturgists and musicians with both space and resources to engage in such discourse. Parishes and individuals have proven to be quite capable of making significant contributions to support key ministries, provided they identify with the mission articulated by the group, ministry, or organization.<sup>25</sup> If they continue to adhere to the living tradition of the Church in good faith, there is no reason to doubt that a new and viable model for supporting the liturgical arts can be established to enliven the *lex orandi*, *lex credendi*, and *lex vivendi* of the Orthodox Church in North America.

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- 1 This problem is certainly not limited to the Orthodox Church. The presence of copyright disclaimers in publications and publisher's websites evidences a cross-denominational problem.
- 2 Robert Taft, *Between East and West: Problems in Liturgical Understanding*, Second Edition (Rome: Edizioni Orientalia Christiana, Pontifical Oriental Institute, 1997), 290.
- 3 As quoted by Kevin Irwin in *Context and Text: Method in Liturgical Theology* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1994), 3.
- 4 Op. cit., 55–6.
- 5 The incipit of the text: "Today He who hung the earth upon the waters is hung on the tree....", John Erickson and David Anderson, preparers, Holy Friday Matins, with introduction by Very Rev. Paul Lazor (New York: Department of Religious Education, Orthodox Church in America), 73.
- 6 See Irwin, 44–82, for an excellent overview of the dialogical relationship between context and text.
- 7 Robert Taft, *The Byzantine Rite: A Short History* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1992), 31ff.
- 8 A consequence of the Council of Ephesus, 431.
- 9 These examples also show how the *lex credendi* of the Church influenced the *lex orandi*, illustrating the historical dialogical relationship between the two.
- 10 The original kontakion should not be confused with the brief, poetical stanza we now find embedded in the canon, the little Hours, and the Divine Liturgy. The kontakion was sung by a gifted soloist, sometimes wearing special vestments, in the middle of the church. Johann von Gardner, *Russian Church Singing*, Vol. 1: *Orthodox Worship and Hymnography* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1980), 45–6.
- 11 See Taft, *The Byzantine Rite*, 56–61 for a brief description of a development of colossal importance.
- 12 Musical scholars have convincingly demonstrated the equally important role of the musical execution of this poetry. Egon Wellesz presented the most comprehensive overview in his classical work *Byzantine Music and Hymnography*, Second Edition (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1961).
- 13 Bennett Hill, "Lay Patronage and Monastic Architecture: The Norman Abbey of Savigny," in Timothy Gregory Verdon, ed., *Monasticism and the Arts* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1984), 178–183.
- 14 See also the list of people who donated books to the Cistercian monastery in Clairvaux in Walter Cahn, "The Rule and the Book: Cistercian Book Illumination in Burgundy and Champagne," in Verdon, ed., above.

- 15 Delma Brough, *Polish Seventeenth Century Music: The Influence of Historical, Political, and Social Conditions* (New York and London: Garland Publishing Inc., 1989), 15.
- 16 Op. cit., 16–17.
- 17 Orest Subtelny, *Ukraine: A History* (Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 97–102.
- 18 Saturday was set aside as a specific day of instruction in music. The brotherhoods provided a comprehensive education, including dialectics, rhetoric, music, arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and philosophy. See Pylip Kozitskii, *Spiv I Muzyka v Kyivskii Akademii za 300 Rokiv ii Isnuvannia* (Kyiv: Muzychna Ukraina, 1971), and I. Isaevich, *Bratstva to 'ich rol' v rozvitku ukrains'koi kultury XVI–XVII st.* (Kyiv: Naukova Dumka, 1966).
- 19 One must be cautious about idealizing this era in the history of the Church. Even though the state supported the study of liturgical music, the diminished status of the Russian Church after the reign of Tsar Peter the Great created new problems for all aspects of church life, including strict censorship of musical composition and performance at the Imperial Court Chapel. See Vladimir Morosan, *Choral Performance in Pre-revolutionary Russia* (Madison, Connecticut: Musica Russica, 1986), 70ff. The Imperial Court Chapel provides an interesting case study as a state patron of the liturgical arts, as students had the opportunity to gain a musical education there and pursue civil service after their voices had changed.
- 20 See Susan J. White, *Art, Architecture, and Liturgical Reform: The Liturgical Arts Society (1928–1972)* (New York: Pueblo Publishing Company, 1990).
- 21 Op. cit., 175. White notes that the exact impact the Society had on the language of the Constitution is not clear.
- 22 See [www.iconography.org](http://www.iconography.org) for an example of the promotion of iconography as liturgical art, with an option for commissioning work.
- 23 Individuals have also contributed to the support of the liturgical arts. In recent news, the A.G. Leventis foundation awarded Cappella Romana a \$20,000 grant to help fund two recordings of early music. See their website, <http://www.cappellaromana.org/frames1.htm>, for details.
- 24 This is not an exhaustive list of functions, but a brief line listing of the publishing process essentials. A great deal of creative effort is put into the creative process itself, and this is simply impossible to quantify.
- 25 A paraphrase of Fr. Anthony Scott's idea in "Orthodox America: Philanthropy and Stewardship," in *Good and Faithful Servant: Stewardship in the Orthodox Church* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2003), 199–200.

# Prayer of St. Simeon

Juliana Hughes



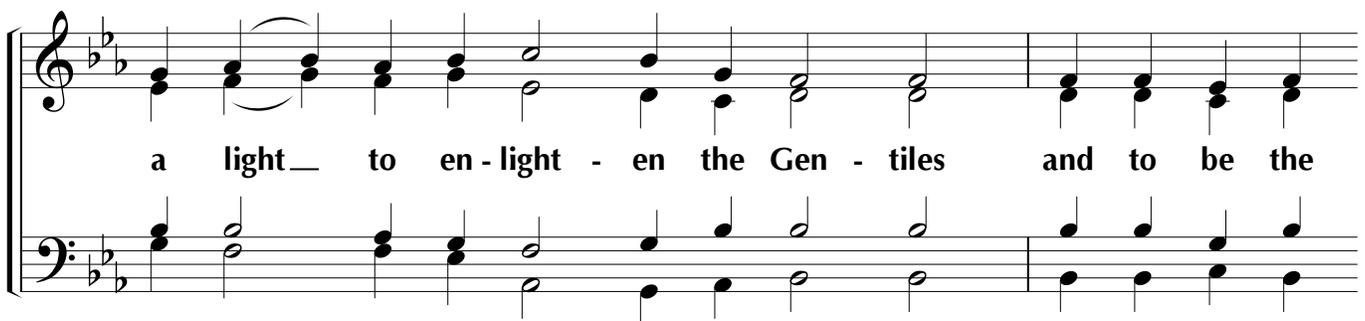
Lord, now let-test Thou thy ser - vant de - part in peace ac-cord-ing



to Thy word, for mine eyes have seen Thy sal - va - - - tion,



which Thou hast pre-pared be - fore the face of all peo - ples,



a light\_ to en - light - en the Gen - tiles and to be the



glo - - - ry of Thy peo - ple Is - - - ra - el.



# TRANSLATING LITURGICAL TEXTS

by Monk Cyril

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The most important consideration in translating liturgical texts is to remember that they will be used in celebrating the liturgy. This might seem so obvious that it does not need to be said, but in fact many of the problems that occur in liturgical translation come about because translators focus their attention primarily backward, toward the source document in the original language or the music that goes with it, rather than forward toward the celebration of the liturgy and the requirements of the clergy, the singers, and the people who will participate in it. In that case, reverence for the usage of another time and another place and an effort to reproduce it mechanically in the translation can produce awkwardness which inhibits worship.

Those who take this approach argue that the original language texts were inspired by the Holy Spirit. True—but the translator must not resist the continued action of the Holy Spirit by adopting strategies that lead to a text that calls attention to itself rather than being transparent to the worship of God.

There is still a place in the church for translations that fit existing melodies, but this article will focus on translations into English which are intended at least in part for new musical settings.

## **Liturgical Celebration Determines Literary Style**

No aspect of liturgical translation gets quite as much attention as that of style. It is truly a battle of “ancients and moderns”—and at least at the present, there is no clear single agreed-upon solution. There seems to be room for a range of appropriate styles, all of which have one thing in common—that the text must serve the liturgical action without getting in the way and without calling attention to itself. This can be done well either in older styles of English or in newer. As we all know from experience, it can also be done badly in either archaic English or modern.

One tip about archaic usage needs to be mentioned, though: Know your limitations. If you are not familiar with the irregular verbs of older English

and the characteristic conjugations, peculiarities of preposition usage, and shifts in meaning that have occurred over the centuries, don’t even try. Badly done imitations of older English are baffling to those who do not read older literature and irritating to those who do.

## **Render Meaning Faithfully but Clearly**

All too often, translators justify their product by referring back to the original document. Others—whether scholars or native speakers of that language—may agree that they have done a fine job, while meanwhile those who use or hear the translation are left baffled. Those who try to sing or chant such a text often face a difficult struggle to make it work. As Eugene Nida and Charles R. Taber note, “When a high percentage of people misunderstand a rendering, it cannot be regarded as a legitimate translation” (*The Theory and Practice of Translation*, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1969, p. 2).

The translation must indeed be accurate, but if it contains elements that are incomprehensible in English, it is still just a rough draft. It needs to be revised until it is clear to the clergy, singers, and people who will use it in worship. Any awkward word or expression can be replaced by another which is equally accurate and clearer. Ponderous technical expressions can always be removed and replaced by more idiomatic expressions. There is no excuse for inventing new expressions such as “pantocratic” or misusing terms such as “philanthropic” to render words in the original language when these terms have an entirely different connotation in English.

## **Translation—the First Link in a Chain**

The translation of the liturgical text is the first step in a process that ends with the celebration of the liturgy. If the translator *creates* problems, these problems will be passed along to each person who follows in the process. These people may be able to mitigate

the problems, but will not be able to eliminate them.

Features that call attention to themselves for their awkwardness, such as unusual technical vocabulary, clumsy rhythms, difficult vowels or consonant clusters, will be inherited by the composer, who will do everything possible to work around them but will basically be stuck with them. These problems will then be passed on to the priest and deacon and the choir director, and finally will be inflicted on the singers and the congregation.

No list of suggestions can guarantee good translation, but the factors that lead to difficulties are so common that such a list may be useful.

- ✦ Remember that a good English translation is good English. Accuracy in rendering the meaning of the original language is a good first step, but a text that is to be used in the celebration of the liturgy needs to stand on its own merits without reference back to its source.
- ✦ Don't use words so that they only make sense when they are understood in a way quite different from ordinary spoken English. For example, if the choir sings a phrase like "myrrh is meet for the dead," members of the congregation will have to stop to figure out whether they are singing "meet" or "meat," and may be led astray by wondering why dead people would be eating meat, anyway. In such cases the meaning of the translation is not sufficiently transparent.
- ✦ Use accurate, short, common-language equivalents for polysyllabic theological terms as often as you can. The long technical terms from Greek and Latin make for clumsy musical settings. A text full of vocabulary like "trihypostatic" and "co-unoriginate" does not lend itself to chanting or singing.
- ✦ Strive for idiomatic English rhythm. English prose and poetry has always tended to have an accent every other syllable or once every three syllables. If you keep the polysyllabic words to a minimum (as suggested above) and concentrate

on one- and two-syllable words, your text will probably also have a good idiomatic rhythm.

- ✦ Avoid archaic rhetorical figures. Byzantines loved them, but Americans get lost. Distortions of normal syntax are particularly hard to follow. Sacrifice the rhetorical tricks in order to make the meaning more transparent.
- ✦ All other things being equal, use vocabulary with pure vowels rather than diphthongs and aim for the fewest possible consonant clusters.
- ✦ Keep the syntax simple. If this means splitting sentences that are rather complex in the original text, so be it. Short sentences are characteristic of good style in modern English, just as Byzantine Greek favors long sentences.
- ✦ Write with clear-cut and relatively balanced English phrases so that the composer can produce musical phrases that have a reasonable amount of symmetry.

### **The Translator as Member of a Worshipping Community**

As St. Paul said, "the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body" (1 Corinthians 12:12). He goes on to speak of the kinds of members in the body of Christ, such as apostles, prophets, teachers, workers of miracles, healers, helpers, and others.

For our purposes, we might speak of translators, composers, clergy, choir directors, singers, and the congregation. Translators who see themselves primarily as members of the body of Christ rather than as scholars or antiquarians will be able to serve the Church with their contribution to the organic process of liturgical worship.

*Monk Cyril is a member of the brotherhood of the Monastery of St. John of Shanghai and San Francisco and a tonsured reader in the Greek Orthodox Church. Prior to coming to the monastery he was chairman of the translation committee for the Old Testament Project of the Orthodox Study Bible (due out in February).*

**T**he translation must indeed be accurate, but if it contains elements that are incomprehensible in English, it is still just a rough draft.

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## **PSALM Notes**

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# Musical Education of Children in the Church

Prepared for Panel Discussion: “Educating Liturgical Musicians in the 21st Century”  
PSALM National Conference, August 2006

by Anne Schoepp

Orthodoxy is a singing culture. When we gather to pray, we sing, and much of our theology is passed on through sacred song in the liturgical services. A great challenge for the Church today is that the secular culture around us is changing into a musically passive culture in which the common people watch the few perform. This change has taken place during my lifetime. When I was young, we sang at church, at school, at Girl Scouts, on the trail, in the car, working in the fields, and at Youth Group. All this singing involved everyone present, not just the musicians. It was an act of community. Community singing and musical participation are becoming rare as iPods increase in gigabyte capacity. Singing is no longer considered a natural act for a healthy human.

This change in our secular culture is unfortunate, for singing is known to be good for the soul. Besides several scriptural commands to sing,<sup>1</sup> both

St. Athanasius and St. Basil describe the benefits of singing the psalms.

*For to sing the Psalms demands such concentration of a man's whole being on them that, in doing it, his usual disharmony of mind and corresponding bodily confusion is resolved, just as the notes of several flutes are brought by harmony to one effect; and he is thus no longer to be found thinking good and doing evil.*

*So he who sings well puts his soul in tune, correcting by degrees its faulty rhythm so that at last, being truly natural and integrated, it has fear of nothing, but in peaceful freedom from all vain imaginings may apply itself with greater longing to the good things to come. For a soul rightly ordered by chanting the sacred words forgets its own afflictions and contemplates with joy the things of Christ alone. – St. Athanasius<sup>2</sup>*

*It (the Psalter) is the common treasury of good doctrine, carefully finding what is suitable for each one. The old wounds of souls it cures completely, and to the recently wounded it brings speedy improvements; the diseased it treats, and the unharmed it preserves. On the whole, it effaces, as far as possible, the passions, which subtly exercise dominion over souls during the lifetime of man, and it does this with a certain orderly persuasion and sweetness which produces sound thoughts.*

*When, indeed, the Holy Spirit saw that the human race was guided only with difficulty toward virtue, and that, because of our inclination toward pleasure, we were neglectful of an upright life, what did He do? The delight of melody He mingled with the doctrines so that by the pleasantness and softness of the sound heard we might receive without perceiving it the benefit of the words, just as wise physicians who, when giving the fastidious rather bitter drugs to drink, frequently smear the cup with honey. Therefore, he devised for us these harmo-*

*Below: The St. Lawrence Children's Choir of Felton, California, performs German folk songs at an Oktoberfest-themed senior dinner. These free dinners are put on monthly by the St. Lawrence Youth Group in conjunction with local community service agencies.*



nious melodies of the psalms, that they who are children in age or, even those who are youthful in disposition might to all appearances chant but, in reality, become trained in soul. . . . A psalm is . . . the elementary exposition of beginners, the improvement of those advancing, the solid support of the perfect, the voice of the Church. . . . Oh! The wise invention of the teacher who contrived that while we were singing we should at the same time learn something useful; by this means, too, the teachings are in a certain way impressed more deeply on our minds. Even a forceful lesson does not always endure, but what enters the mind with joy and pleasure somehow becomes more firmly impressed upon it. —St. Basil<sup>3</sup>

The secular music teacher Shinichi Suzuki believed and taught that musical training ennobled the soul, and devoted his life to teaching children for this reason. “For the sake of our children, let us educate them from the cradle to have a noble mind, a high sense of values, and splendid ability. At our institute we use violin playing to develop these qualities in children.” He also taught that ability is developed through experience and repetition.<sup>4</sup> Today science shows us many physical and psychological benefits for those who engage in music, and a basic online search will produce several articles detailing these benefits. In short, singing engages the body, mind and spirit and truly integrates the whole person.

Perhaps this personal integration is one reason the Church has established sacred singing as a significant part of its practice. In order to continue this tradition, Orthodox parishes need able music leaders—composers, arrangers, conductors, and chanters—as well as singers to member the choirs. Ability will spring forth from children who experience and participate in music, so our first step is to cultivate singing culture within the Church and provide that experience. Singing must first be viewed as a natural and beneficial act for the average person. Joining in community song is the basic level of musical participation from which special ability and leadership can be cultivated.

Fortunately, young children are relatively free from cultural constraints, and most will sing gladly. This is the place to start. Church music leaders should endeavor to build the opportunities for children to sing in the church, whether in church school, youth choir, Christmas plays, at church camp, or other social gatherings. Children can be started singing by anyone with a decent voice who can carry a tune—church-school teachers, choir members, or others. Varied leadership will develop the understanding that



singing is a natural act. Whenever possible, there should be singing in the home.

Musically gifted or particularly interested children can be identified and put into apprentice-type positions in the musical life of the church. Maybe they can sing psalm verses at the chanter stand, or help with the choir book organization and maintenance. Their parents should be made aware of their interests and abilities and encouraged to provide further musical education or to enroll them in available school music programs. Children can sing at services as well when they are ready. They will need to be able to stand still through a service and stay focused for the appropriate length of time in order to participate in services. They need to be taught how to act and learn about liturgy as they grow.

In non-liturgical situations, children can be taught Bible songs, good folk songs and camp songs, add-on songs in which they create their own verses, and so forth. The troparia of the major feasts of the Church can be easily memorized; they contain the essence of each feast and quite a bit of theology. It is useful for children to learn about scales, how to read notes, solfege, good breathing, and basic singing technique. Much of this can be taught through games that are engaging, and the children will gain a sense of confidence in their new skills, which in turn may benefit the Church in the future.

Including psalmody in church education is not a new idea. In the book, *The Early Church Fathers as Educators*, Elias Matsagouras cites early church educators using the psalms as part of a basic Christian education. Protogenis, a priest of Edessa (c. AD 150), taught the children of his parish basic Christian subjects, writing, reading, and singing. A fourth-century Protogenis used the Psalter for teaching reading.<sup>5</sup> “Chrysostom also suggested that a good

**S**inging  
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natural and  
beneficial act  
for the average  
person.

way of receiving a Christian education was to read from the Bible and to sing the Psalms, which would have a good effect upon the child's soul. Singing psalms was also recommended by Eusebius of Caesarea (263–340), and before him by Justin the Martyr.” Under Cyril of Jerusalem the church included psalmody in its catechesis.<sup>6</sup>

Some school districts today recognize the connection between musical education, mental development, and test scores, and develop or continue to fund strong music programs. Unfortunately, this is not the norm, and children are getting limited music in our public schools. Surely there is a distinction between singing psalms and a music education, but a child accustomed to singing the Psalms will be more inclined to continue participating in church music.

If the church accepts the task of educating its children musically, it will sustain its liturgical life and at the same time benefit their souls, minds, and bodies.

- 1 Is. 54:1; Psalms 5:11; 30:4; 33:1–3; 34:3; 47:6; 66:2; 95:1, 6; 96:1–3, 7–9; 98:1, 4; 147:1, 7; Eph. 5:18–19; Col. 3:16; James 5:13; 1 Peter 2:9.
- 2 St. Athanasius, *The Letter of St. Athanasius to Marcellinus on the Interpretation of the Psalms*, presented as the appendix in *St. Athanasius on the Incarnation* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary, 1953, 1989), pp. 114–115.
- 3 St. Basil the Great, *Exegetic Homilies*. Homily 10 (1, 2). B# CUA Vol. 46, pp. 151–154.
- 4 Suzuki, Shinichi, *Nurtured by Love: The Classic Approach to Talent Education* (Suzuki Method International Summy-Birchard Inc., 1983), p. 17.
- 5 Matsagouras, Elias G., *The Early Church Fathers as Educators* (Light and Life Publishing Co., 1977), p. 25.
- 6 Op. cit., pp. 28–29.

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