Liturgical Song in the Worship of the Church

David Drillock

There is not a single liturgical service in the Orthodox Church which does not use chanting and singing extensively. Why is this so? We need look no further than the beginning of the Divine Liturgy to find the answer to this question. The Orthodox Liturgy begins with the exclamation: "Blessed is the Kingdom of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit ...." With these words we are invited to enter into and experience the foretaste of a heavenly reality, the Kingdom of heaven on earth, which is manifested in the Church's liturgy. In this reality there is already expressed a transformation of our present world and of us who dwell in it. We are not simply inhabitants living in a particular spot on the planet, but we are "standing in the temple of Your glory, and we think that we are in heaven."[1] Not only is our life being transformed, but all aspects of the world participate in this transformation. A simple table becomes the throne of the Lord, bread and wine are transformed into the very life of Christ, and the syllables that make up our language of everyday communication become words filled with the Holy Spirit. The words that are uttered from our lips are indeed words of the Holy Spirit, words that are spoken of and by God. The Kingdom of God, experienced in the Liturgy, is an expression of divine beauty: singing, hymnography, iconography, ritual, solemnity are all part of what is experienced by the faithful as the epiphany or manifestation of "heaven on earth."

A good example of this manifestation of beauty as the expression and experience of the Kingdom of God can be seen in the report of the emissaries of Prince Vladimir upon their return to Kiev

1 *Troparion* at lenten daily matins.

after witnessing the Byzantine Liturgy at the cathedral of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople. In describing their experience of the Liturgy, they wrote: "The Byzantines led us to the edifice where they worship their God, and we knew not whether we were in heaven or on earth. For on earth there is no such splendor or beauty, and we are at a loss how to describe it. We only know that God dwells there among men."[2]

What is most significant in this report is not that the Russian emissaries witnessed a Byzantine worship service that they perceived to be "beautiful," but that in this beauty they experienced the very presence of God.[3]

2 S. H. Cross and O. P. Sherbowitz-Wetzor, *The Russian Primary Chronicle, Laurentian Text* (Cambridge, MA, 1953) 110-111.

3 Russian ambassadors of the 10th century were not the first to speak of the church as "heaven on earth." In the opening chapter of the eighth-century liturgical commentary of Patriarch Germanus I of Constantinople, we read: "The church is an earthly heaven in which the supercelestial God dwells and walks about." St Germanus of Constantinople, *On the Divine Liturgy* The Greek text with translation, introduction and commentary by Paul Meyendorff (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1984) 57.

Photius, Patriarch of Constantinople in the second half of the ninth century, in speaking of the beauty of the church, remarks that when entering just the atrium, "it is as if one had entered heaven itself." Cf. Cyril Mango, *The Homilies of Photius Patriarch of Constantinople* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1958) 177.

And in the 20th century, the late Fr Alexander Schmemann, referring to the celebration of the Feast of the Annunciation writes: "thousands of theological and philosophical books have been written about faith, and indeed, there are rational and scientific principles which apply...but no step by step explanation can match the vigil on the eve of Annunciation when finally, after the service's lengthy development, the long awaited hymn 'With the voice of the archangel we cry to Thee, O pure one...' is sung. At that moment the whole world, with all its suffering and torment, with all its weariness and evil, with its jealousy, pettiness, and emptiness, suddenly is purified and begins to radiate a Spring that is truly beyond this world. Is this just emotionalism, is it some kind of mental breakdown or self-hypnosis? No, human beings have forgotten the truth about the world, about life, about human nature, about the souls purity and its first-created purpose. But at that moment, the truth breaks through, and suddenly we know once again that it is possible to breathe deeply and fill our lungs with the pure air of heaven, of spirit, of love. In that moment, and others like it, something is revealed which impels me to say with boundless conviction: yes, this is truth, this is beauty, and nothing on earth compares to it. In that moment, I know that heaven has descended to earth, and that the soul has found

I. Forms of Liturgical Song

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

Dialogue: The Participation of all the People

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

An example of dialogue in liturgical prayer is the litany. The word litany comes from the Greek word *lite* which means intercession. In the liturgical services, there are a number of litanies: the Great Litany or Litany of Peace, the Augmented Litany, the Litany of Fervent Supplication, the Evening Litany and the Morning Litany, all of which include invocations or petitions by the celebrant and a response by the people, i.e., a dialogue. In the Great Litany, the celebrant addresses the faithful and establishes an acceptable order of prayer. First he asks "let us pray to the Lord in peace," the peace that is only possible because of the mediation of Christ, for it is in Him and through Him that we are able to pray with the certitude that our prayers will be heard and answered. The celebrant continues: "let us pray for the salvation of our souls, for the peace

what is has thirsted for and sought so blindly and painfully" (*Celebration of Faith, Sermons,* Vol. 2, *The Church Year* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1994) 29, 30.

of the whole world, for the union of all." At the conclusion of each petition, the people respond, "Lord, have mercy," i.e., Lord, be gracious to us and receive our prayers. [4]

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

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

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

4 The Greek word *eleison* is from the word *eleos* which translates the Hebrew word *hesed.* The meaning of this work, although many times translated by "mercy," means more "steadfast love, tenderness, compassion, or loving-kindness." As Fr Thomas Hopko writes: "it is not a simple plea for pardon, but a supplication that God continue to show His love to us" (*The Lenten Spring* [Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1983] 62).

The celebrant, presiding over the gathered community, then offers to God the prayer of thanksgiving of the faithful. This prayer expresses our total gratitude to God for all that He has done for us in creating, saving, and glorifying the world, endowing us with the Kingdom which is to come. The faithful join with the angels who stand next to God, singing:

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

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

Again, what is most evident from the Anaphora text itself is that it has the same form—i.e., dialogue—as the Litany and it too implies communal participation—the prayer of the whole gathering.: "Let us lift up our hearts"; "We lift them up unto the Lord"; "In peace let us pray to the Lord"; "We praise Thee, we bless Thee, we give thanks to Thee ...and we pray to Thee." The main reason that we come together in worship is to become one people in God and to make our common offering of thanksgiving to Him. As Paul Meyendorff has pointed out, the use of the first person plural is always used in liturgical prayer in order to emphasize that liturgical prayer is the prayer of the entire community.[5] Indeed, this Greek word for worship—*leitourgia*—means a common or corporate action in which everyone takes an active part.

5 Cf. Paul Meyendorff, "The Liturgical Path of Orthodoxy in America" in *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 40/1-2 (1996).

Psalmody: Alternating, Responsorial and Antiphonal

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

"If the faithful are keeping vigil in the church,
David is first, middle, and last,

If at dawn anyone wishes to sing hymns,
David is first, middle, and last,

In the holy monasteries, among the ranks of the heavenly warriors,
David is first, middle, and last,

In the convents of virgins, who are imitators of Mary,
David is first, middle, and last,

In the deserts where men hold converse with God,
David is first, middle, and last[6]

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

> they (the monks) divide themselves into two groups, and sing psalms in alternation with each other, at once intensifying their carefulness over the sacred texts, and focusing their attention and freeing their hearts from distraction. And then they entrust the lead of the chant to one person, while the rest sing the response.[7]

The first method mentioned by St Basil is commonly referred to as *alternating psalmody.* Those present in the church are divided in

6 Pseudo-Chrysostom, *De poenitertia,* PG LXIV, 12-13. C.F. James McKinnon, *Music in Early Christian Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 90.

7 *Letter CCVII,* PG 32. Quoted in McKinnon, *op. cit.,* 68.

two groups and sing psalms to each other, alternating psalm by psalm or verse by verse, taking care that the words of the sacred verses are clearly understood. The *kathisma* at our services today ("Blessed is the man," for example) are often chanted in this manner.[8]

The most widespread method used for the chanting of psalms at this time, however, is *responsorial* psalmody, the second example noted by St Basil. One person (a leading chanter) begins the chanting of the psalm verse, while all the others respond with a verse selected from the psalm itself. Such a practice was not only common at the time of St Basil, but was a well-established traditional way of psalm singing, having its roots in the original poetic form and structure of many of the psalms themselves. An example of such a form is found in Psalm 135, where the second half of each verse of the psalm is exactly the same: "for His mercy endures forever." Biblical scholars suggest that these Psalms, which include within themselves such repetitive verses, appear to have been composed for precisely the purpose of responsive recitation. Long before Basil, Christians were chanting selected psalms in this manner, as is witnessed by Tertullian, Eusebius, and others. Tertullian, for example, writes that those who are more exacting in their prayer are accustomed to add to their prayers an "Alleluia" and that sort of psalm in which those present respond with closing verses.[9]

The most common example of responsorial psalmody in our worship of today is the *Prokeimenon,* a selected verse from a particular psalm that is first intoned by the soloist chanter in order to cue the people and establish the pitch. This common verse (or half-verse or simply a final element of a verse) is then repeated by the people (choir). The chanter then begins to chant the psalm from the beginning, and after each verse or half verse the people,

8 For liturgical use in Orthodox worship, the Psalter (150 Psalms) is divided into twenty sections or *kathismata* with three sets of Psalms in each section. Especially in monasteries all 150 Psalms are chanted in the course of a week, beginning at Vespers on Saturday evening and concluding at Matins on the following Saturday.

9 *De oratione xxvii*, 27, PL I, 1301

forming one choir, chant the common response. As a conclusion, the soloist chanter sings the first half of the selected "response," and the people conclude with the second half. The Prokeimenon of Great Vespers celebrated on Saturday evenings, taken from Psalm 92, is a good example of the responsorial form:

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

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

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

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

Soloist (deacon): For He has established the world so that it shall never be moved. (V.1c)

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

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

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

Soloist (deacon): The Lord is King;

Choir (people): He is robed in majesty.

Early testimony indicates that responsorial psalmody was also employed for the singing of the *koinonikon* (Communion Hymn) at the Divine Liturgy and the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts. Psalm 34 serves as the communion hymn for the Liturgy of the Presanctified, with the first half of verse 9 being used as the common response: "Taste and see that the Lord is good." From the testimony of St Cyril of Jerusalem and others this was also the communion psalm at the Divine Liturgy. St Cyril, writing in 348 to the congregation of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, testifies that the chanter invites all to communion of the holy mysteries with a sacred melody, saying: "Taste and see, that the Lord is good."[10] St Augustine (354-430), St Jerome (342-420), and St Ambrose (339-397) all

10 St Cyril of Jerusalem, *Lectures on the Christian Sacraments*, edited by F.L.Cross (Crestwood, NY: St Vlaudmir's Seminary Press, 1977), 79

testify to the singing of this verse during communion. From the descriptions of Eusebius, Egeria, St John Chrysostom and others, the communion psalm prior to the fourth century was chanted responsorially, the soloist chanting the verses of the psalm and the people responding with a constant phrase as a refrain.

Beginning with the fourth century, antiphonal psalmody began to gain in popularity, first in Jerusalem, then spreading to all parts of the Eastern Empire. The antiphonal format was especially associated with the Cathedral Rite, which stressed the celebratory nature of liturgical services by singing everything. Distinguished from responsorial psalmody, the antiphonal form called for the division of the people into two choirs, each of which responded alternately with a short, common refrain to psalm verses chanted by one (or two) soloist chanters.[11] These short refrains were either a selected psalm verse, an Alleluia, a short non-Scriptural phrase (such as "Glory to Thee, O Lord," "Have mercy on us, O Lord," etc.) or an independent sacred strophic hymn, called a *troparion*. At the conclusion of the psalm verses, the little doxology ("Glory to the Father....") was chanted, followed by a terminating troparion.

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

The antiphonal format is used today at the beginning of the Divine Liturgy (in the Greek tradition) and at liturgies on Feast-days of the Lord (in the Slavic tradition). Examples of troparia inserted between the psalm verses include "Through the prayers of

11 Conomos, Dimitri E., *The Late Byzantine and Slavonic Communion Cycle: Liturgy and Music* (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1985), 18

the Theotokos, O Savior, save us," "O Son of God, (who rose from the dead), (who was born of the Virgin), (who was baptized in the Jordan), (who ascended in glory), save us who sing to Thee," in addition to the troparion of the particular Feast on major feast days.

The antiphon serves a specific function in liturgical worship. St Germanus writes in his commentary on the Liturgy that "the antiphons of the Liturgy are the prophecies of the prophets, foretelling the coming of the Son of God."[12] The words of the Psalms were used many times by Christ Himself to foretell his suffering, death, and resurrection. The texts of the psalms are understood in the light of Christ—they "point" to Christ The insertion of newly-composed troparia, serving as refrains between the verses of a psalm, functions as the Church's interpretation of the psalm, e.g., "Let God arise ..." (Ps 67:1) points to the words of the Paschal troparion "Christ is risen from the dead ...." The resurrection of Christ from the dead is the fulfillment of the prophecy uttered by the psalmist.

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

In this context, then, singing is an indispensable part of Orthodox worship in which all the people present participate. This does not imply, however, that everyone must sing everything. Traditionally, there were solo chanters who were responsible for singing the changing verses of selected psalms, and small groups of chanters who were at times appointed to sing special types of hymns that changed from day to day, feast to feast, or season to

12 St Germanus of Constantinople, *op. cit.*, 73

season. But this does not mean that liturgical singing was understood as a private or personal function which would force part of the gathering to become simply passive listeners or spectators. Those specially trained chanters had the duty to lead the singing, to maintain harmony and good order to the liturgical responses.

Hymnography

> What then, brethren? When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification. (1 Cor 14:26)
>
> Be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart, and for everything giving thanks in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father. (Eph 5:18-21)
>
> Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, as you teach and admonish one another in all wisdom, and as you sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him. (Col 3:16-18

It is unfortunate that there exists very little documentation of worship services of the earliest Christian communities. Very few texts remain from the first centuries of Christianity. Those that do mention or refer to elements that would be used by Christians at communal prayer are not at all concerned with describing the details of a specific Christian worship service. The gospels of Matthew and Mark recount the Holy Supper of Jesus with His disciples, and say that, following the breaking of the bread and the drinking of the cup, they "sang a hymn and went out to the Mount of Olives" (Mt 26:30, Mk 14:26). There is no apparent way to identify what particular hymn Jesus and his disciples sang, just as there is no possible way to determine exactly what psalms, hymns,

and spiritual songs St Paul referred to in his exhortation to the Colossians. Scholars of both liturgy and church music are not in agreement as to whether these three words: psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, are synonymous or whether they designate three particular forms of musical song. We might agree with the opinion expressed by Egon Wellesz, the eminent historian of Byzantine music, that these three terms clearly signify different forms of praise. The psalms refer to the collection of psalms that were customarily used in the Jewish synagogue; hymns are new compositions that the early Christians wrote, similar to the hymn fragments found in the New Testament; and spiritual songs were "melismatic melodies of the alleluias and other exultant songs of praise."[13] Or we may see these simply as three different words used synonymously in a passage by the apostle which makes the point that singing is not to be rendered simply for pleasure but as an expression of gratitude and thanksgiving to God for everything He has done.

In the New Testament, and especially in the Book of Revelation, we find fragments of hymns that the early Christians composed, knew by memory, and passed on orally to one another. Examples of new hymnography are found in the Didache and in the writings of Justin Martyr. And we know from the report of Pliny the Younger, governor of Bithynia and Pontus, to the Emperor Trajan that lapsed Christians, when they gathered together, sang a "hymn among themselves to Christ, as to a god."[14] For whatever reason, however, these early hymns disappeared, and it is only in the fourth century, after the peace of Constantine, that the continuous development of liturgical hymnography in the Eastern Orthodox Church begins, a development that was not uniform throughout the Greek speaking world, nor was it totally accepted without reservation by the Christian communities, and especially by the monks.[15]

13 Wellesz, Egon, *A History of Byzantine Music and Hymnography*, Second Edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), 41.

14 *Letter x, xcvi*; LCL II, 402-404, quoted in McKinnon, *op.cit.*, 27.

15 Mitsakis, Kariophilus, "Hymnography of the Greek Church in the Early Christian Centuries" in *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik*, Band 20 (Wien:

II. Cathedral Rite and Monastic Rite

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

The "chanted rite" (*asmatike akolouthia*), also referred to as the Cathedral Rite, evolved from the services of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem, as well as in the cathedrals of the major cities of the Christian world, such as Rome, Antioch, and Constantinople. Parallel with this liturgical ordo was another pattern of worship that was being established and developed in the Egyptian, Palestinian, and Syrian monasteries. Characteristics of the cathedral ordo included extensive chanting, entrances and processions, which, in terms of musical style, resulted in the creation of professional choirs and the eventual development of an elaborate form of melismatic, soloistic, singing. Monks who lived in the desert, especially those who settled in the Egyptian desert, emphasized the recitation of the psalter, called the "canon of psalmody," Biblical readings and penitential prayer. However, monks who resided in or near the cities, coming into frequent contact with the life of the secular churches, added to their canon of psalmody certain cathedral usages, resulting in the development of a type of "mixed monastic rite."[16]

The liturgical practice that centered around the Church of the Resurrection in Jerusalem gradually spread, probably by way of Antioch, to Constantinople and the Great Church of Haghia Sophia, eventually influencing the rites of all the cathedral churches of the Orthodox world. The Palestinian mixed monastic ordo, developed primarily in the Monastery of St Sabbas, was little by little adopted by the monks of Constantinople, from whence it spread

Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1971), 39.

16 Cf. Taft, Robert, *The Liturgy of the Hours in East and West* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1986), 75-91.

to other monastic centers, becoming the model for the Typikon of Mount Athos. The fusion of elements of one rite to another was not unusual during this process of development and transference, and eventually it was the monastic ordo that, in the Byzantine rite, prevailed over the "cathedral rite" for the services of the Divine Office. For the Eucharistic Liturgy, however, the usages of the Constantinopolitan cathedral rite predominated. Symeon of Thessalonika, in his treatise on prayer (15th cent), testifies to the disappearance of this rite in Constantinople as a result of the Latin persecution (i.e, the occupation of Constantinople by the Crusaders in 1204). Thus, the Typikon in use by Orthodox churches today represents what one may call a "mixed rite," combining elements from both the cathedral and monastic traditions.

The Troparion

Together with the development of these rites is the development of Byzantine hymnography. The earliest form of Byzantine hymnography is the troparion, originally a short, freely-composed prayer or hymn of praise which was inserted after each verse of a psalm or Biblical canticle, such as the song of Moses (Exodus 15:1-15), the prayer of Azariah (Dan 3:26-45), or the song of the Three Children (Dan 3:52-88). In the fifth century, troparia, now composed in strophic form and much longer, became a regular part of the Vespers and Matins. The central Vesperal hymn, "Gladsome Light", which glorifies God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, already referred to as an ancient hymn by St Basil the Great (c. 330-379), is an example of a troparion, as is the hymn "Only-Begotten Son," ascribed to Justinian I (527-565).

Although we are unable to know how these early troparia sounded, as no musical manuscripts from this period have survived, musicologists generally agree that these early Byzantine hymns had simple melodies, inasmuch as they were known and rendered by the congregation. The tunes themselves were probably in syllabic form, i.e, one note or tone to each syllable of the text and were not written down. The troparion, "Gladsome Light" al-

ready referred to as ancient by St Basil the Great and still the central hymn of Orthodox Vespers, has no written music before the sixteenth century. Likewise, the "Great Doxology," dating to at least the fourth century, and "Only-begotten Son," the troparion ascribed to Justinian I (527-565), have no written musical tradition before the thirteenth century.[17]

In the early sixth century, some two hundred years following the Peace of Constantine, Christianity became essentially the religion of the empire under the Emperor Justinian. This gave rise to a flurry of activity in the building of churches and their artistic decoration. Justinian ordered the building of Hagia Sophia with the specification that it be large enough to hold the court, the Senate, the patricians, and a hugh crowd. Justinian also ordered that the number of the clergy at Hagia Sophia and of the three churches annexed to it not exceed 425, which included 60 priests, 100 deacons, 40 deaconesses, 90 subdeacons, 100 doorkeepers, 110 lectors and 25 singers.[18] Such dimensions could not but affect the way in which the liturgical services were celebrated. Entrances and processions became rituals in themselves, and new hymns and chants were required in order to fill up the time now required for these added entrances and processions.

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

17 Conomos, Dimitri, *Byzantine Hymnography and Byzantine Chant* (Brookline, MA: Hellenic College Press, 1984), 11.

18 Quoted in Wellesz, *op.cit*, 165.

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

> Woe to us, my son! The days have come when monks turn away from the enduring nourishment which the Holy Spirit gives them and surrender themselves to singing. What kind of contrition (*katanyxis*) is that? How can tears come from the singing of *troparia*? How can a monk possess contrition if he stays in the church or in his cell and raises his voice like the lowing of the cattle? For when we stand in God's sight we must be most contrite and not presumptuous. Monks have not come into this desert to place themselves before God in pride and presumption, to sing melodic songs and make rhythmic tunes, to shake their hands and stamp their feet. Our duty is to pray to God in holy fear and trembling, with tears and sighing, with devotion and diligence, with modesty and with a humble voice. See, I tell you, my son, the days will come when Christians will destroy the books of the holy Evangelists, the holy Apostles and the inspired Prophets, and they will rip up the Holy Scriptures and compose *troparia* in their place.[19]

That singing is a detriment to prayer resulting in the loss of contrition is a theme that occurs often in the writings and tales of many of the desert fathers and eastern monastics. Abba Silvanus warned his disciple that even the chanting of psalms in a melodic fashion is the first pride and exaltation, "for you say: 'I sing, but my

19 *Apophthegmeta Patrum*, quoted by Quasten, Johannes, *Music & Worship in Pagan & Christian Antiquity* (Washington, DC: National Association of Pastoral Musicians, 1983), 95.

brother does not'."[20] Abba Silvanus also warned that "singing hardens the heart, turning it into stone and keeping the soul from repentance. If you desire to repent, abandon singing."[21] Even St John Chrysostom, in response to a question concerning why psalms are sung rather than recited, explained:

> When God saw that many men were lazy, and gave themselves only with difficulty to spiritual reading, He wished to make it easy for them, and added the melody to the Prophet's words, that all being rejoiced by the charm of the music, should sing hymns to Him with gladness.[22]

The Kontakion

The creation of a new poetical form in the sixth-century Contantinopolitan cathedral rite is associated with the names of the poet-hymnographers Anastasius, Kyriakos, and, above all, Romanos. Although at the time of its creation, this genre was known simply as a Hymn, Psalm, Poem, Song, or Prayer, the name of *kontakion* (from kontos or scroll on which the parchment containing the hymn was wound) came to be used to designate this specific poetic form. A kontakion consists of eighteen to thirty, or sometimes more, stanzas (*oikoi*), all structurally alike, with the exception of an introductory verse (*prooemium*). This prooemium is rhythmically and melodically independent of the oikos with the exception of the last line, which serves as the common refrain (*ephymnion*) for all the stanzas. The length of a single oikos varies, from three to thirteen lines. All the oikoi are composed on the pattern of a model stanza, referred to as the hirmos (*ephymnion).* The occurrence of the refrain at the end of each stanza indicates that

20 Nikon of the Black Mountain, *Pandects*, treatise 29, quoted by Uspensky, Nicholas, *Evening Worship in the Orthodox Church* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985), 62.

21 *Ibid.*

22 *In psalmum* xli, I: PG LV, 156, quoted in Reese, Gustave, *Music in the Middle Ages* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1940) 65.

the kontakia were sung by a soloist, with the choir or congregation joining at the singing of the refrain.

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

With the kontakion came also a new system of versification requiring that all stanzas of a poem have the same number of lines as the hirmos on which they were modeled. It was not sufficient that each line of a stanza correspond to a line in the model stanza, that is, having the same number of syllables, but the stress accents as well were required to fall on the corresponding syllables of each line as the hirmos.[23] This would enable the accentuated notes of the melody to coincide with the accentuated syllables of the stanzas. In this way the music and the poetry of a kontakion combine to make a single entity. It is thus not surprising that the hymnographers of this period were not only poets, but were also skilled musicians, well versed in the bible and theology.

The kontakia of Romanos, himself a converted Syrian Jew, reveal the influence of three types of literature developed in Syria; namely, the *memra*, a kind of poetical homily that followed the reading of the Gospel in the morning service, the *sougitha*, a series of strophic stanzas, attached to homilies, that used dialogue throughout and whose first letters of each stanza frequently formed an acrostic, and the *madrasha*, a favorite form employed in the works of St Ephrem, using rhyme, variety of meter, a refrain, and an acrostic.[24] While all of these elements can be found in the kontakion, the richness of Romanos' kontakia clearly surpasses those Syrian poetic forms mentioned above. The accentual form

23 Trypanis, C. A., "Romanos the Melodist" in *The Orthodox Ethos, Studies in Orthodoxy*, Vol 1, edited by A. J. Philippou (Oxford: Holywell Press, 1964), 187.

24 Carpenter, Marjorie, *Kontakia of Romanos, Byzantine Melodist,* I: *On the Person of Christ* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1969), XIX.

was improved, the accentual rhythm was more varied, and the refrain, which in the Syrian literature was an independent line, was related to the content of each stanza, thus heightening the poem's dramatic effect and involving the congregation much more directly with the personae of the poetic dialogues.

The Kanon

The last period of Byzantine hymnography began towards the end of the 7th century with the introduction, within the monastic rite, of the *kanon* into the morning service (*Orthros*). The kanon is a complex poetical form, made up of odes, each of which originally consisted of from six to nine troparia. The first troparion of each ode, called the *heirmos,* serves as a model, establishing both the melody and rhythm for all subsequent troparia in that ode. While the theme of the heirmos is taken from the theme of one of the Biblical canticles, oftentimes simply paraphrasing specific verses of the canticle, the troparia which follow each hirmos develop themes related to the feast or saint to which the Kanon is written. At first, kanons were composed only for Lent, then for the period between Easter and Pentecost This new hymn form replaced the singing of the Canticles, which from now on would only be read, followed by the singing of the appropriate ode of the kanon. At a later date, when kanons were composed for all feast days of the ecclesiastical year, the custom of reciting the canticle before the singing of the hirmos and troparia was maintained during Lent and between Easter and Pentecost; on other days the canticles were simply omitted.

Thus the Kanon became the predominant literary form in the monastic office. The main difference is that whereas the kontakion is a poetical homily and paraphrases and comments on scripture, the kanon is a hymn of praise and makes thematic connections between the biblical canticle and the feast or occasion for which it was composed. Eventually, an abbreviated form of the kontakion was incorporated into the kanon, and placed after the sixth ode. Authors of kanons include Andrew of Crete (660-740),

John of Damascus (675-749), Kosmas of Jerusalem, and, in the ninth century, Theodore the Studite and Joseph the hymnographer.

Hymnography in the Liturgical Cycle

All three types of hymnography: troparia, kontakia, and kanon are organized for use in worship according to the church's division of *liturgical time*. This time is comprised of a daily cycle, between morning and evening; a weekly cycle, between Sunday and Sunday; and a yearly cycle, between Pascha and Pascha.[25] The texts of the hymns and prayers for the offices of the daily cycle are found in the *horologion* (lit. "the book of the Hours"). The book called the *Oktoechos* contains the proper chants (the movable hymns) for the services of the weekly cycle, arranged in eight weekly sections, and sung in one of the eight modes or tones. Each of these eight sections are further arranged so that the ordering of the propers corresponds to the ordering of the services for each day of the week, beginning with Vespers on Sunday (celebrated Saturday evening) and concluding with Matins of Saturday. Further, the hymns found in the *Oktoechos* will correspond thematically to the commemorations of the days of the week: praise of the Resurrection for Sunday, the angels for Monday, St John the Baptist on Tuesday, the Cross for Wednesday and Friday, the apostles and St Nicholas for Thursday, and the martyrs and the Theotokos for Saturday. The *Menaion* (lit. "monthly") contains the hymns written for the commemoration of saints and the celebration of feasts throughout the fixed calendar year. Arranged in numerical order for each day of the month, the *Menaion* is generally issued in twelve volumes, one volume for each month of the year. Special hymns for the fasting period of Great Lent, beginning with the four Sundays before Lent and concluding with the Midnight service before the Paschal Matins, are found in the *Triodion,* and the propers for the services of the Paschal Vigil through the Feast of All

25 Cf. Schmemann, Alexander, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1986), 151-162.

Saints, celebrated on the Sunday following Pentecost, are contained in the *Pentecostarion.* From such a review, one can see clearly the ordering of the church's worship in reference to the calendar of time—daily, weekly, and yearly.

From at least the 8th century, chants in the Byzantine church were systematically assigned to one of eight Byzantine musical modes (echos). The chief characteristic of a Byzantine mode is not its identification with a particular "scale" (such as the eight modes of ancient Greek musical theory), but the essence of its melodic form. Dimitri Conomos writes: "each mode is characterized by a deployment of a restricted set of melodic formulas peculiar to that mode, which constituted the substance of the hymn."[26] For the chanting of the psalms, each tone (mode) employed distinct melodic patterns for the intonation and the cadence. However, the recitation between the intonation and cadence, though more elaborate than a simple monotone, is much less important in terms of tonal distinction; there is a clear dividing line, however, between the recitation part and the cadence. The pattern itself is flexible, for it must be able to be adapted to the specific requirements of the text. The determining factor for the adaptation of the intonation and the recitation is textual accent. Depending on the text, the intonation pattern may be expanded or contracted while the elaboration of the reciting tone is governed by the textual accents. The determining factor for the cadence, however, is not textual accent but rather syllable count. As Oliver Strunk has shown, "regardless of their accentuation, the final syllables of the particular verse or half-verse will be mechanically applied to the tones and tone-groups of the cadential part of the formula."[27]

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

26 Conomos, Dimitri, *Byzantine Hymnography and Byzantine Chant,* 33.

27 Strunk, Oliver, *Essays on Music in the Byzantine World* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1977), 174.

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

III. The Evolution of New Concepts

It is only after the tenth century in Byzantium that a new concept of church singing and composition emerges, characterized by what Dimitri Conomos describes as an "evolving freedom from the use of standard, traditional material; free invention; technical virtuosity, and replacement of old material with new."[28] Strunk discerns a new attitude to church singing in Byzantium occurring as early as the middle of the ninth century with the development of a more elaborate style for the singing of *doxastika* and other liturgically prominent hymns. Already at this time, he writes, "composers were beginning to think of themselves as virtuosi and to expect virtuosity of the singers who sang their music."[29] At any rate, by the fourteenth century this resulted in a new style of church singing in Byzantium, called *kalophonic* (lit. "good or beautiful sounding"). In this new style of singing the emphasis no longer focused on the "meaning" of the words but rather on the "sound" of the music. The church service, now in the hands of professional singers and well-trained choirs, thus became a place of musical performance and enjoyment.

Similar results occurred in Russia in the mid-seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The choir, not only in cathedral churches and large city churches, but even in small, village churches, actually became a substitute for "all the people," to the point that nothing at all was sung by the congregation. The very few exceptions were in churches located in the Carpathian region of Rus'. Among the Galicians, Volhynians, and Ruthenians the practice of full congregational participation was still evident in Orthodox churches at the beginning of the twentieth century. Following the

28 Conomos, Dimitri E., "Changes in Early Christian and Byzantine Liturgical Chant" in *Studies in Music*, 5 (1980), 52.

29 Strunk, *op. cit.*, 160.

Bolshevik Revolution in 1917, Johann von Gardner, the eminent scholar of Russian neumatic chant, lived in this area for a period of four years. He describes his encounter with this form of singing in the following way:

> In Subcarpathian Rus' in all the villages both among the Uniates and also among Orthodox, there was always practiced only congregational singing of the complete services, not excluding the changeable (proper) hymns in all the varied chants. They sang according to the *Great Zbornik* (collection of prayers and liturgical texts) containing every necessary text. The numerous chants (not excluding all the *podobny,* not even found in the Synodal notated liturgical books) were known by everyone, even the children of school age. The leader of song—the most experienced singer from the parishes—standing at the *kliros* sang the chant. As soon as the worshippers would hear the hymn, they would join in the chant and the entire church sang all the *stichiry,* all the *tropars,* all the *irmosy*—in a word, everyone sang properly according to the established canonical parts of the Liturgy. They sang in unison and whoever could, imitated or reinforced the bass. The impression proved to be overwhelmingly strong.[30]

IV. Call for the Restoration of Liturgical Tradition

The question of "church singing with the participation of all the people" was one of the issues raised by the bishops of the Russian Church in 1905 when they were asked to submit reports in preparation for a Great Council of the Russian Church. In his report Bishop Constantine of Samara writes:

> We must restore singing to that state which it should and formerly did have. It is necessary to renew in the minds of the people the notion that congregational

30 Gardner, Johann A. von, *Liturgical Singing of the Russian Orthodox Church* (in Russian) (Jordanville, NY: Holy Trinity Monastery, 1977, 1981), vol. 2, 102, footnote 211.

> singing is the norm, and that choral singing is only a substitution for this...[31]

Bishop Evlogii of Kholm, who from 1922 to 1946 was Metropolitan of Western Europe, writing in support of congregational singing, suggested that this be "gradually introduced, beginning with the litanies and short hymns and then eventually include all the hymns of the Liturgy and the All-Night Vigil."[32]

The restoration of congregational singing was not simply a desire to institute reform in order to comply with a canonical standard or a historical precedent, but it was seen as a measure which would assist in giving to liturgy the life, the joy, and the power which is inherent in its purpose, content, form, and message. This is what the Deanery Report of the Shenkursk Province (Archangel Diocese) emphasized:

> Generally, one can no longer overlook the concern for lifting up the grandeur and majesty of the Church services to the necessary and rightfully sacred heights, so that each believing Christian could, in fact, find joy and consolation in the Church, and not feel bored and fatigued. Choral, or even better, congregational singing and comprehensible chanting will play an important role in developing this.[33]

The question of congregational participation and the availability of suitable music are issues that are being raised in our churches today by both clergy and lay people. With a few isolated exceptions, however, very little thought and even less direction has been given to these issues. As mentioned above, some ninety years ago bishops in Russia raised, discussed, and even offered suggestions for the implementation of a program to restore congrega-

31 *Otzyvy epakhial'nykh arkhiereev po voprosam o tserkovnoi reform*[e] (St Petersburg, 1906) quoted in Shimchick, John, "Music and Worship," in *Orthodox Church Music* (Syosset, NY, No. 2, 1985), 7.

32 *Ibid*', quoted in Shimchick, John, *The Responses of the Russian Episcopate Concerning Worship (1905 and the Liturgical Situation in America* (Unpublished master's thesis prepared for St Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary, 1980), 89.

33 *Ibid.*, 90

tional singing to the church services. They viewed this a necessity in order to bring life and vitality to liturgical worship at that time. At this time many of those same issues are being addressed throughout the Orthodox world. We need to look at these issues in the light of the following three principles, based on the authentic tradition of song, worship, and liturgy.

1. Liturgical song is the verbal expression of the corporate prayer of the Church

This is not so obvious as it sounds. First, we must comprehend that there is a difference between private prayer and liturgical prayer, between individual piety and corporate worship. As Fr Alexander Schmemann wrote: "We need to be thoroughly aware that we come to the temple not for individual prayer but to assemble together as the Church."[34] Our private prayers should be said at home, in secret, in our room with the door shut, as our Lord taught (Mt 6:5-6). This, however, does not mean that we should not bring our personal cares, desires, anxieties, and troubles to the Church. We certainly should, but the first purpose of our assembling together is to constitute the Church, to become truly the body of Christ: "Where two or three are gathered together, there I am in the midst of them" (Mt 18:20). And once we gather together, our common prayer begins with the affirmation: "Blessed is the Kingdom...." Behold, there Christ is in the midst of us, He is present with us, already giving us a foretaste of His heavenly Kingdom.

The first act of this gathered assembly is to glorify the Kingdom of God, and then to offer common supplications in peace before the One who is "the peace, the joy, and the life of the world." In the Great Litany we pray, as the Church, "for the peace from above and for the salvation of our souls," and if we take the time to analyze, as briefly done for the Litany and the Anaphora at the beginning of this essay, we would easily find that the whole Liturgy

34 Schmemann, Alexander, *The Eucharist* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1988), 15.

can be viewed in no other way than as corporate prayer, as a prayer uniting all those in the gathered assembly. The texts of the litanies confirm this, the texts of the celebrant's prayers confirm this, and so do the texts of the hymns. We proclaim at the Little Entrance: "Come let us worship God our King," we sing at the conclusion of the Trisagion: "have mercy on us," we chant during the Great Entrance: "Let us who mystically represent the Cherubim," we affirm that "we have seen the true light," and we joyfully entreat the Lord to "let our mouths be filled with your praise, that we may sing of your glory...."

From what has preceded, there can be little doubt that the Liturgy is a corporate action, the prayer of all those who gather together in the name of Christ to celebrate His incarnation, death, burial, resurrection and continued presence wherever "two or three are gathered in His name." If there is agreement on this, then it must also be agreed that the liturgical form for this common prayer should be capable of accommodating all those present, not only those with good or exceptional musical talents. Participation by all the people in the singing of praise must be encouraged. In those places where choirs remain the norm, full congregational participation will not be something that can be instituted overnight. A plan must be developed and put into action. Proper preparation and teaching will be required. The work of the choir director and the choir, will not diminish or disappear but will, in fact, be even more demanding; special training sessions and workshops might be required. Nevertheless, such an effort will be rewarded, for it will enable all people, with one heart, one mind, and one voice, to offer their common prayer to God. The words of St John Chrysostom, encouraging his congregation to participate more fully in the singing, might serve as appropriate inspiration:

> And even if you do not understand the meaning of the words, for the time being teach your mouth to say them, for the tongue is sanctified by the words alone whenever it says them with good will. Once we have become confirmed in this custom, we will not neglect this congenial duty (*leitourgian*) either deliberately or through indif-

> ference, as custom will compel us to fulfill this grateful service (*latreian*) every day, even if unwilling. Nor will any complaint concerning this singing arise, even if one has grown old, is still a child, has a rough voice, or is altogether ignorant of rhythm. This is because what is sought here is a sober soul, an alert mind, a contrite heart, sound reason and a clear conscience. If having these, you enter into the holy choir of God, you will be able to stand beside David yourself.[35]

2. Praying with understanding is fundamental to Orthodox liturgical worship

The language of the people is the language used when those same people gather together for worship: this is the norm demonstrated by the Church in the missionary activity of the brothers, SS Cyril (Constantine) and Methodius, who brought Christianity to the Slavic lands in the late ninth century. In a famous speech that St Cyril (Constantine) made in Venice on his way to Rome to plead before the bishop of Rome for use of the Slavonic language in the Liturgy he defends his Slavic translation not only on the basis of Christ's command "to go to the whole world and preach the Gospel to all mankind," but also on the understanding that the worshipper must be able to participate in the prayer of the Church. He writes:

> ...if you bless with the spirit, how can any one in the position of an outsider say the 'Amen" to your thanksgiving when he does not know what you are saying? For you may give thanks well enough, but the other man is not edified. I thank God that I speak in tongues more than you all; nevertheless, in church I would rather speak five words with my mind, in order to instruct others, than ten thousand words in a tongue... If, therefore, the whole church assembles and all speak in tongues, and outsiders or unbelievers enter, will they

35 *In psalmum xli, 2*; PG LV, 158, quoted in McKinnon, *op. cit.* 81.

> not say that you are mad? But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or outsider enter, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all, the secrets of his heart are disclosed; and so, falling on his face, he will worship God and declare that God is really among you.[36]

This raises the issue and brings to our discussion the problems inherent in translation. Liturgical translators must give better consideration to the fact that the texts of the church hymns are poetry. These poetico-liturgical texts are not merely rational statements expressing theological, ethical, moral, or spiritual teachings about the faith. Indeed, the hymns do serve these purposes. The rich repertoire of Orthodox hymnography contains literally thousands of hymns which are distributed in services throughout the year. These hymns—in the form of troparia, stikhera, kontakia and kanons—quote, paraphrase and interpret Scripture, describe historical events, express, clarify and define doctrinal statements, provide moral lessons for leading a good life, contemplate the life, death, and resurrection of the Savior, provide examples to the faithful for repentance and consolation, and offer simple praise and thanksgiving to God for His wondrous works. However, these texts are much more, they are not meant simply to convey ideas about God, but to reveal and manifest an experience of and with God.[37]

For this reason the texts of our hymns are not communicated in the liturgical celebration in the same manner that they would be in a classroom or teaching situation. In contrast to a formal teaching situation where they would be rationally presented and analyzed, they are presented in the liturgy in their fullness, in a context that involves all of the senses. The poetic verses convey meanings to us intuitively through images, images that are conveyed through melody

36 "Life and Acts of Our Blessed Teacher Konstantin the Philosopher, the First Enlightener of the Slavic Tribe" in *Kiril and Methodius: Founders of Slavonic Writing*, edited by Ivan Duichev, English translation by Spass Nikolov (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1958), 77.

37 In the words of Nicholas Lossky, "in the Liturgy the word is an edifying word in the fullest sense, since it is the *Word* who is its foundation." Cf. Nicholas Lossky, "Some Thoughts on Liturgical Music" in *Orthodox Church Music*, 1 (Syosset, NY), 5.

and rhythm in chant, as well as in iconography and in the movement of the celebrants and the people. We carry these images home with us together with the total memory of the liturgical event we have experienced. It is a memory to which we can return time and time again. Thus, the remembrance becomes an ontological part of our life. While countless examples can be given to illustrate this, one will suffice. Simply singing or hearing a short melodic pattern from the troparion, "The Noble Joseph," one recalls immediately the image of the taking down of Jesus from the cross by Nicodemus, the theme of the Vespers celebrated on the Friday of Holy Week.

Much has been written on the subject of biblical translation in general and of liturgical translation in particular.[38] It is not necessary to review the major theses of the numerous books and scholarly articles dealing with all the issues of biblical and poetico-liturgical translation. It will be sufficient simply to note that there are two basic approaches to the art of translation which stand at the center of our contemporary debate on the methodology of translation: sense-to-sense and word-for-word. St Jerome in his letter to Pammachius explained his methodology in translating the Hebrew Scriptures into Latin (the Vulgate). Jerome maintained that his approach, to translate sense-for-sense rather than word-for-word was the main principle that had guided all great classical and ecclesiastical writers. For Jerome, the sense and the spirit of the work are more important than the letter. On the other side, the word-for-word approach to translation was advocated by St Augustine, for whom "servitude to the words" alone can, as Garrett puts it, "assure the retention of the meaning of the original, even if the result is pure barbarism and solicism."[39]

38 Paul Garrett, in his two excellent articles "The Problem of Liturgical Translation," *St Vladimir's Seminary Quarterly* 22/2-3(1978), 83-113, and "The Problem of Liturgical Translation: An Addendum," *St Vladimir's Seminary Quarterly* 24/1 (1980), 37-50, focuses on the main issues of translation pertinent to liturgical hymnology used in Orthodox worship and proposes a plan for a common approach for Orthodox liturgical translating efforts that could hopefully end the spontaneous and chaotic process of translations that is going on today.

39 Garrett, "The Problem of Liturgical Translation," 98, referring to *De Civitate Dei,* 18:43.

It would be quite presumptuous to dare think that a simple answer can be given to solve the problems inherent in our English liturgical translations. What needs to be stated here is a reminder to those who do the translating that our liturgical texts are precisely poetry. They are not legal documents, academic treatises, dogmatic formulas, or newspaper articles. They also are not held, in a hierarchy of values, to the same qualifications and standards as sacred, inspired Scripture. Accuracy is important, understanding is necessary, beauty is required.

The poetic structure, the effects of rhythm, meter, rhyme, word-imagery, syntax, is an essential element of the "transcendent" attribute of liturgy. This is why it is so important that the liturgical texts not lose their meaning in its fullest sense and it is why a literal translation, void of the rhythm and melody of the poem itself, seldom, if ever, is capable of transmitting the richness, the strength and the power of the original.

The translation of liturgical texts is not new to Orthodoxy, which has traditionally advocated the preaching of Gospel in the language of the people. However, it is one thing to translate from the original Greek to Slavonic, a language that was, in a sense, "created" from the Greek, and quite something else to translate from the Greek or Slavonic to English, where the structure of the language and the "genius" of its poetic form are quite different.[40] We should be mindful that "what so often sings itself in the original tongue often wheezes and stutters when translated. Accuracy is not enough unless one is content with a prose version of what was sung. To break up the prose into strophes and stanzas is not enough either. Even in the new language it has to sing."[41]

40 As an example of how closely the Slavonic translators were able to follow the same meter of the Greek originals, Nicholas Uspensky points out that in a sticheron (hymn) in honor of St John Chrysostom the Slavonic translation not only maintains the same number of lines or strophes, but "in some lines individual Greek words correspond with the Slavonic 'according to meaning,' 'according to number of syllables,' and even at times 'to the same location of accent'." Cf. Uspensky, Nicholas, *Drevne-russkoe pevcheskoe iskusstvo* (The early Russian art of singing) 2nd ed. (Moscow: Sovetskii Kompozitor, 1971), 37.

41 Ellis E. Pierce, "The Translation of Biblical Poetry," in *The Bible Translator* 5/1(1954), 62.

Composing music for the church in America has, for the most part, been limited to "adapting" to English prior-existing music written to Greek or Slavonic texts. This includes English "settings" based on traditional chant forms—Byzantine, znamenny, Kievan, Serbian, Romanian, etc.—as well as adaptations of compositions identified with the music of the numerous "national" Orthodox churches, written by composers such as Bortniansky, Kastal'sky, Sakallarides, Musicescu, and Mokranjac, to name just a few. The results of these efforts vary widely, mostly depending upon methodology. Where the main concern is the preservation of the original melody, evident especially in the earliest settings of English translations made in the 1930s and 1940s, one generally finds constant repetition of words, poor phrasing, and improper or simply incorrect accentuation. It is not difficult to find in these early settings the words of the first line of the translated Cherubic Hymn, "Let us who mystically represent the Cherubim," set, or rather, pasted under a Byzantine or Slavic melody, with the following result: "Let us, let us, let us who mystically, mystically represent, represent the Cherubim, the Cherubim." While the original melody might be preserved, the meaning is completely obliterated. Liturgical services with settings such as this have been described by Fr Alexander Schmemann as "Greek or Russian services in English, but not English services."[42]

To be fair, one must acknowledge that today, in a conscious effort to promote a better and clearer understanding of the content and meaning of our liturgical texts, more importance is being given to the "setting" of our hymns, that is, the placement of the text with the music. Does the melodic shape adequately reflect the logical verbal inflections of the textual phrases? Do musical structure and grammatical form coincide? Do melody and rhythm adhere to the patterns of stressed (accented) and unstressed syllables? Are melodic cadences consistent with the grammatical punctuation marks? Is the integrity of the text maintained, or do musical

42 Alexander Schmemann, "Problems of Orthodoxy in America" in *St Vladimir's Seminary Quarterly* 8/4(1964), 181.

demands alter the continuity of the phrases so that short phrases, a word, or even one syllable of a a multi-syllabic word are often repeated in a effort to "fit" a text to a given melody?[43] As more and more emphasis is being devoted to questions such as these, the quality of our English "settings" have improved greatly.

3. Music in church worship can never be detached from its liturgical purpose

There are many talented and gifted composers in the church today and, just as they are professional in their standards of music technique, they should be just as professional in their knowledge of liturgy. The church composer should be competent in both music and liturgical worship. Liturgical forms are important and should be foremost in the composer's "mind" even before he attempts to write down musical notes. As Johann von Gardner explains:

> In the realm of vocal music the liturgical singing of the Orthodox Church constitutes an autonomous realm that is guided by its own aesthetic laws and standards. It is self-evident that it would be a grave mistake to expect or demand from liturgical singing the same forms and genres that are found in secular music or even in religious music that is separated from worship. The intermingling of these two realms can lead, on the one hand, to misunderstandings concerning liturgical singing, expecting from it that which it is not meant to contain, and, on the other hand, to the introduction of foreign elements into the liturgy that can subtly and gradually distort both the forms of liturgical singing and the very essence of the liturgy, resulting, once again, in an erroneous appraisal of its forms and aesthetic principles.[44]

43 Fr Sergei Glagolev treats these issues, as well as other similar important musical/textual considerations, in "The Sound of Sacred Music" (Interpretation: Part Two), *Orthodox Church Music,* 2 (Syosset, NY, 1985), 25-33.

44 Gardner, Johann von, *Russian Church Singing:* Volume 1: *Orthodox Worship and Hymnography* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1980), 62.

Today, however, one can hear in our churches music that is inadequate both to the sacred text and to the liturgical rite. One can hardly call appropriate the selection of a large choral work for the responses of the Great Litany, the choice of a setting for the singing of the creation psalm at the beginning of Vespers that employs only the refrains and not the psalm verses, or the use of an ornate concerto-style composition to replace the psalm appointed during the priest's communion. Some might claim that we are still in a transition period, noting that some church choirs have yet to sing the responses in English. However, we can no longer delay the process of determining a discriminative approach to the selection and acquisition of a repertoire of church music based on liturgical considerations.

It will be appropriate at this point to return to the theme on which this short essay began – beauty, worship, and song. Song in worship cannot be reduced to a simple "functionary" role – it goes hand in hand with the purpose of worship itself. "I will praise the Lord as long as I live, I will sing praises to my God while I have my being," proclaims the Psalmist (Ps 146:2). Earthly worship is an imitation of heavenly praise. The earthly church at prayer unites the faithful with the prayer of the angelic praise. This thought is not simply a Byzantine theoretical supposition combined with platonic imagery, but is the vision of the Prophet Isaiah and the account of heavenly worship expressed in the fourth chapter of the book of Revelation. That the song of the church on earth is united with the praise in heaven is a theme found in the writings of many of the church fathers. St John Chrysostom writes:

> Above, the hosts of angels sing praise; below men form choirs in the churches and imitate them by singing the same doxology. Above, the seraphim cry out in the thrice-holy hymn; below, the human throng sends up the same cry. The inhabitants of heaven and earth are brought together in a common assembly; there is one thanksgiving, one shout of delight, one joyful chorus.[45]

45 *Homily I in Oziam seu de Seraphinis* I, PG lvi, 97, quoted in McKinnon, *op cit* 89

Byzantine mystical thought developed the idea of the angelic transmission of the chant itself. In the sixth century Pseudo-Dionysius articulated the concept of the divinely inspired "prototype"; the idea of an "intuitive divine inspiration...in which the hymns and chants are echoes of the heavenly song of angels, which the prophets gave to the people through a sense of spiritual hearing."[46] These divinely inspired hymns and chants, which were viewed as models of the heavenly songs, serve as the foundation for all creativity. God and beauty are interrelated, and in the words of Pseudo-Dionysious:

> Divine beauty is transmitted to all that exists, and it is the cause of harmony and splendor in all that exists; like light, it emits its penetrating rays onto all objects, and it is as if it called to it everything that exists and assembles everything within it.[47]

The task, then, of the church artist or musician is not self-expression, not creation that reflects individual, personal feelings, attitudes, and principles, but "the comprehension and reproduction of heavenly songs, the re-creation of divine images that were transmitted by means of ancient religious archetypes."[48] These songs are not his, they do not belong to him. They have been revealed to him and he transmits this revelation to the collective body of the church. This explains why the names of the composers during the early Byzantine and Slavic periods remain anonymous, their works are not their self-creations which they personally own, but are the inspired revelations which they transmit to all of humanity. The artist submits his will to the will of God in order to be able to receive and to transmit the divine revelation. Is not this the essence of the story of the writing of the Nativity Kontakion by Romanos. In his recorded "Life" we read that the great poet-

46 Vladyshevskaia, Tatiana, "On the Links Between Music and Icon Painting in Medieval Rus" in *Christianity and the Arts in Russia*, edited by William C. Brumfield, and Milos M. Velimirovic (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 18.

47 Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Divine Names* (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), 76; this translation in Vladyshevskaia, *op. cit.*, 18.

48 Vlaldyshevskaia, *op.cit.*, 18.

hymnographer "received the gift of composition of kontakia when there appeared to him in a dream the likeness of the Holy Virgin who gave him a piece of paper and commanded him to eat it. He thought it best to eat the paper. Is was the feast of the eve of the Nativity and, straightway from arousing from sleep he mounted the ambo and began to sing 'Today the Virgin....'"[49]

This is the concept that has served as the root for the development of both music and icon painting in the church and has much to offer us today in understanding the function of the artist in the life and work of the church. It strongly emphasizes that the artist—the iconographer or the composer—does not work in a vacuum. There are patterns, models, prototypes that serve as the foundation for the creative process. These models are the collected treasury of the church and the prototypes which serve as the artistic canon or rule. "The more lasting and firm the canon," writes Pavel Florensky, "the more deeply and purely it expressed general human spiritual need; the canonical is that which belongs to the church; that which belongs to the church is collective, and the collective belongs to all humanity."[50]

For the early church musicians, then, the compositional process consisted in fitting together, with slight modifications dependent on the text, such transmitted short melodic patterns (called by musicologists *music formulae* or *kernels*) which constitute the melodic substance of the hymn. These formulae came into existence as a result of constant oral repetition so that in the course of time, they became crystallized into fixed melodic patterns that were organized and then associated or assigned to a certain church mode, or *echos*. While in the Western tradition the modality of the tonal system is predominantly associated with a certain scale, in the Byzantine tradition, the echos or mode is defined more on the basis of the types of melodic patterns that are grouped together, and make up the melodic material for a particular mode.

49 Germanos, *Life of Romanos*, quoted in Carpenter, *op.cit.*, xvii.

50 Florensky, Pavel, *Iconostasis* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1996) 87. This translation in Vladyshevskaia, *op. cit.*, 19.

In church iconography, the icon's beauty is understood to be a reflection of the holiness of its prototype. When the artist lost this understanding and replaced it with the goal of representing people and objects in their visible, daily condition, that is, what is disclosed to the eye alone, to the emotions, and to human reason, not only was the spiritual value lost but the aesthetic quality itself deteriorated.[51]

Church music must be grounded in a true understanding of the purpose, content, and expression of the Liturgy itself—the manifestation of the beauty and joy of God's Kingdom. This indeed represents a challenge, not only to our church composers, but to our translators and poets, our liturgists and our theologians, our hierarchs and our pastors, and to all those faithful who "sing praises to our God."

51 Ouspensky, Leonid, *Theology of the Icon*, Volume II (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1992), 345.

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