TRANSLATING LITURGY[1]

> "Zeal to promote the common good, whether it be by devising any thing ourselves, or revising that which has been laboured by others, deserveth certainly much respect and esteem, but yet findeth but cold entertainment in the world. It is welcomed with suspicion instead of love, and with emulation instead of thanks: and if there be any hole for cavil to enter, (and cavil, if it do not find an hole, will make one) it is sure to be misconstrued, and in danger to be condemned. This will easily be granted by as many as know story, or have any experience. For was there ever any thing projected, that savoured any way of newness or renewing, but the same endured many a storm of gainsaying, or opposition?"[2]

I was once asked to give a paper, whose proposed title was 'Translating the Liturgy', but I demurred, and suggested that the definite article be omitted and the title be simply 'Translating Liturgy'. The point that I was making, that I wished to broaden the scope of my talk to include other texts than the Orthodox Eucharistic Liturgy alone, will be clear to speakers of English. But the point could not so easily be made in Latin or Russian, which have no definite article. This brings me at once to the first thing I want to say about translations: they are always approximations, always no more than attempts to convey in the grammar, idiom and vocabulary of one language what was originally expressed in those of another. I would like to illustrate this by looking at the opening verse of St John's Gospel.

Here it is in the Greek original, the Latin Vulgate and, in English, in the New Revised Standard Version and Revised English Bible:[3]

GNT Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος.
VUL In principio erat Verbum et Verbum erat apud Deum et Deus erat Verbum.

NRSV In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

REB In the beginning the Word already was. The Word was in God's presence, and what God was, the Word was.

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[1] This is a revised version of a paper first read to the annual conference of the Fellowship of SS. Alban and Sergius at Chester on 17 August 1995. This means that in most cases the Psalm numbers are one less than those in most English versions.

[2] *The Translators to the Reader* [King James, or "Authorised", Version, 1611].

[3] The following abbreviations are used in the various examples:
ASB = Alternative Service Book [1970]; AV = Authorised Version; CW = Common Worship [2002], ELLC = English Language Liturgical Commission, ERM = English Roman Missal [1970]; FRM = French Roman Missal [1972], [these are the official translations of the *Missale Romanum* issued by Pope Paul VI in 1969]; GNT = Greek New Testament [as found in modern scholarly editions]; LIT ENG = Official Translation of the Archdiocese of Thyateira and Great Britain, [1995]; LXX = Greek Septuagint [3rd century BC]; MT = Masoretic Hebrew Text [the standard Rabbinic text of the Bible]; NRSV = New Revised Standard Version [1989]; REB = Revised English Bible [1989]; TR = Textus Receptus [roughly speaking the standard Byzantine Greek text of the New Testament, still used by the Orthodox Churches and the one underlying the older English versions, such as the AV]; VUL = Latin Vulgate [4th century For the view of the second Vatican Council on this and the LXX, see the Council's decree *Dei Verbum* §22].

Note that Latin, together with Slavonic and Russian, cannot preserve the distinction in the Greek between the word 'God' with and without the definite article, since they have no definite article. English and French, on the other hand, do not normally use the article with proper names and so they too are unable, without considerable paraphrase, to preserve the distinction either. The Latin could equally well be rendered, 'and God was the Word'. The English too could be understood as identifying the Word with God. Origen, however, in his commentary on St John's Gospel, points out that there is a distinct difference between ὁ Θεός and θεός.[4] The former means what we mean by God the Father, in other words it is effectively a proper name, while the latter means what Nicea will mean by 'consubstantial with the Father'. Here translations into languages which do not operate like Greek can only approximate to the original, unless, like the REB, they employ an explanatory paraphrase. There is the further problem that 'word' is only a partial translation of λόγος, as a glance at a Greek lexicon will show. Liddell and Scott devote five and a half columns of small print to λόγος, and they remark that it is used 'rarely of a single *word*' and never in this sense in the grammarians. Orthodox liturgical texts constantly play on the meanings of λόγος and its cognates, like λογικός, which does not mean 'wordy', but 'rational', or 'spiritual', like the 'worship' of Romans 12,1 or the 'milk' of 1 Peter 2,2.[5] The phrase from Romans, not unnaturally, occurs in the eucharistic liturgy in both Greek and Latin. [Here the English of the new Missal, in its version of the Roman Canon, simply removes the allusion to St Paul and substitutes one to John 4, 'in spirit and in truth'.[6] On the other hand, where the text of 1 Peter is used for the Introit of Low Sunday it has,

> Like new-born children you should thirst for milk, on which
> your spirit can grow to strength.

That strikes me as a singularly inadequate translation, to put it no more strongly. Here is the verse together with a number of attempts at translating it.

> NT ὡς ἀρτιγέννητα βρέφη τὸ λογικὸν ἄδολον γάλα ἐπιποθήσατε, ἵνα ἐν αὐτῷ αὐξηθῆτε εἰς σωτηρίαν.
>
> VUL Sicut modo geniti infantes rationabile [*v.l.* rationale] sine dolo lac concupiscite, ut in eo crescatis in salutem.
>
> DOUAI As new-born babes, desire the rational milk without guile, that thereby you may grow unto salvation.
>
> KJV As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.
>
> NRSV Like new-born infants, long for the pure, spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow into salvation.

[4] Cf. his commentary II.2, where he writes 'He [St John] puts the article when the appellation "God" refers to the uncreated cause of all things; he omits it when the Word is named "God"'.
[5] Human beings are endowed with λόγος, or 'reason' and hence are 'rational'. Animals are not so endowed, and hence are ἄλογοι, or 'irrational', 'without reason'. A horse in modern Greek is an άλογο.
[6] 'Bless and approve our offering; make it acceptable to you, an offering in spirit and in truth'.

I have included the Douai version here, since I detect in the King James Version, with its 'pure milk of the word' an attempt to wrest the text to the reformed doctrine of *sola scriptura.* The King James version comes with a health warning against heresy.

The second general point I would like to make is this: all translation is interpretation. In one sense there is no such thing as a literal translation, except perhaps of railway timetables and telephone directories.

There are two other general problems of translating to which I would like to draw to your attention.

The first is the paradoxical fact that the greater the translator's knowledge of the relevant languages, the greater the difficulty of translation. This is because the translator knows how much is being missed, how many nuances of meaning just cannot be conveyed in the translation. To solve this problem translators adopt various devices, of which the most obvious is that of paraphrase in the manner of the REB. If liturgical texts are one of the principal means by which the truths of the Faith are handed on, if they are one of the principal vehicles of the Tradition, then translations must be as precise and accurate as possible. One technique, which was used by some ancient translators of Greek into Syriac, is to use two words for one in the original. This solution has been adopted in the Litany of Peace in the new translation of the Liturgy.

> Ὑπὲρ πλεόντων, ὁδοιπορούντων, νοσούντων, καμνόντων, αἰχμαλώτων καὶ τῆς σωτηρίας αὐτῶν.

Here the word σωτηρία refers primarily to physical safety, but since the Greek word, and its Slavonic equivalent, also means 'salvation' in the theological sense, we decided, unlike previous translators, who simply put 'salvation', to put both words in our version.

> For those who travel by land, air or water, for the sick, the suffering, for those in captivity, and for their safety and salvation, let us pray to the Lord.

Another way of trying to achieve absolute fidelity to the original is to adopt the technique of the Slav translators, who employed a rigorous method of 'word for word' translation, even to preserving, as far as possible the exact order of words in the Greek original. They also seem to have established bilingual word lists, so that as far as possible, the same Greek word is always translated by the same Slavonic one. This can sometimes produce curious results in translation, but it means that the original has, so to speak, been captured like a fly in amber.[7] The Slavonic New Testament and the translations of the liturgical texts, for example, regularly translate the Greek word γνῶσις, 'knowledge', by разум, which in modern Russian means 'reason', rather than 'knowledge'. This explains the somewhat curious way in which разум is used by some of the nineteenth century Russian religious philosophers.

[7] There is an interesting problem in the prayer of St Ephrem. Where Greek has 'meddling' the Slavonic has 'despondency'. The latter clearly represents the well known monastic vice of *akedia*, though whether the Slavonic is translating a variant Greek text, or has introduced the idea independently, I have not yet been able to discover.

The second is the problem of the connotation, and sometimes even the denotation, of words in languages where living speakers cannot be consulted.

To illustrate this I give the following example from the opening of Psalm 44, which is frequently used of the Mother of God in liturgical texts.

MT לַמְנַצֵּחַ עַל־שֹׁשַׁנִּים לִבְנֵי־קֹרַח מַשְׂכִּיל שִׁיר יְדִידֹת׃

רָחַשׁ לִבִּי דָּבָר טוֹב אֹמֵר אֲנִי מַעֲשַׂי לְמֶלֶךְ לְשׁוֹנִי עֵט סוֹפֵר מָהִיר׃

LXX Εἰς τὸ τέλος, ὑπὲρ τῶν ἀλλοιωθησομένων· τοῖς υἱοῖς Κορε εἰς σύνεσιν· ᾠδὴ ὑπὲρ τοῦ ἀγαπητοῦ.

Ἐξηρεύξατο ἡ καρδία μου λόγον ἀγαθόν, λέγω ἐγὼ τὰ ἔργα μου τῷ βασιλεῖ, ἡ γλῶσσά μου κάλαμος γραμματέως ὀξυγράφου.

VUL In finem pro his qui commutabuntur, filiis Core, ad intellectum, canticum pro dilecto.

Eructavit cor meum verbum bonum; dico ego opera mea regi. Lingua mea calamus scribae velociter scribentis.

KJV To the chief Musician upon Shoshannim, for the sons of Korah, Maschil, A Song of loves.

My heart is inditing a good matter: I speak of the things which I have made touching [BCP 'unto'] the king: my tongue *is* the pen of a ready writer.

NRSV To the leader: according to Lilies. Of the Korahites. A Maskil. A love song.

My heart overflows with a goodly theme; I address my verses to the king; my tongue is like the pen of a ready scribe.

CW My heart is astir with gracious words;
as I make my song for the king,
my tongue is the pen of a ready writer.

The Hebrew of the words that interest us is as follows. The word מַשְׂכִּיל, which probably means a type of song, comes from the root √SKL, which means 'to be prudent', 'to consider', 'to ponder', hence the LXX's translation, followed by the Vulgate. שִׁיר יְדִידֹת means literally, 'song of loves', i.e. a love song. The Hebrew is clearly feminine plural and so it is an interesting question why the LXX translator has a masculine singular. רָחַשׁ is a word which only occurs here, so the meaning must be something of a guess. It would seem to be related to a noun meaning a 'stew pan', and in later Hebrew it means to 'stir'. The image seems to one of 'bubbling' or 'boiling'. מָהִיר means 'quick', from a verb meaning 'to hurry', and hence, when used of a scribe, 'skilled'. The 'ready' of AV is now archaic and fails to convey the force of the Hebrew. It is somewhat surprising that NRSV and CW have maintained it.

The title, as it appears in the LXX, is important, in particular the phrase ὑπὲρ τοῦ ἀγαπητοῦ, 'for the beloved', which the Fathers understand Christologically. This is why to write, as José de Vinck and Leonidas Contos do in the introduction of their translation of the LXX Psalter, 'The quaint titles have been omitted, because they are generally incomprehensible' is to display, to put it no more strongly, an astonishing ignorance of Orthodox tradition. Their version of the opening verse is identical to that in the NRSV, with the change,

for the worse, of 'address' to 'offer'. Theophilos, Bishop of Antioch in around 190, writes,

> Therefore God, having his own Word innate in his bowels begot [probably an allusion to Ps. 109.3] him together with his own Wisdom, having uttered him before everything else.[8]

The word I have translated 'uttered' is in Greek ἐξηρεύξατο which means 'to vomit', 'to disgorge', neither of which will quite do as a translation in this context. As I said just now, very often the translator from an ancient language has no guide to the connotations of a word to the original user, and may therefore miss important nuances of meaning. Fortunately in this instance we have a guide. St John Chrysostom says that the word denotes an **involuntary** movement, one over which one has no control and one, moreover, connected with the table. The Prophet possessed by the Spirit 'disgorges' what the Spirit gives him to speak. So St John of Damascus, in the well-known Irmos of the first Ode of the Canon for the Annunciation, with the same verse in mind, uses this word in the same way, 'I will open my mouth and it will be filled with [the] Spirit, and I will utter a word to the Queen [and] Mother'. Theophilos uses it of the eternal generation of the Word because, like the later writer of the Irmos, he has in mind the opening of Psalm 44, 'My heart has uttered a good Word'. Origen, in the third century, knows of this interpretation[9] and St Cyril of Alexandria, in the fifth century, writes of this verse, 'Here consider with me the coming forth, or begetting [γέννησις] of the Word of God from the Substance of God the Father' [PG 69:1026]. St Augustine, his slightly older contemporary, says that 'some understand [the speaker] to be the person of the Father who says, "My heart has uttered a good word", suggesting to us an ineffable generation [*nativitatem*]'. The whole Psalm, says St Cyril, 'concerns the mystery of Christ' and this is no doubt why he chose it as one of the Psalms for the Royal Hours of Christmas. St Augustine says that 'the "Beloved" was seen by his persecutors, but yet not "for understanding" [*ad intellectum*, as the Latin title of the Psalm has it]'. An Orthodox translation, therefore, should make the Christological reading of the Psalm possible. Coverdale's 'My heart is inditing of a good matter' and *Common Worship*'s "My heart is astir with gracious words" hardly suggest the eternal generation of the Word, nor for that matter does this by a well-known Orthodox translator of the Psalms, 'My heart is bubbling over with a good word'. Here again a translation for liturgical use can only approximate to the original. Neale and Littledale in their commentary, published in 1868, write, 'It is almost impossible to enter into the very strict explanation of the *Eructation* of the good word, without falling into coarseness that modern taste will not endure'.

A recent report by the Church of England's Liturgical Commission, *Language and the Worship of the Church*, says that 'Ideally a Psalter for liturgical use will be an accurate translation of the Hebrew into poetic English, with a sense

[8] Ἔχων οὖν ὁ θεὸς τὸν ἑαυτοῦ λόγον ἐνδιάθετον ἐν τοῖς ἰδίοις σπλάγχνοις ἐγέννησεν αὐτὸν μετὰ τῆς ἑαυτοῦ σοφίας ἐξερευξάμενος πρὸ τῶν ὅλων. *Ad Autolycum*, II. 10

[9] He discusses it at some length in his commentary on St John's Gospel. *In Evangelium Ioannis* I,24 and 42.

of the rhythms and cadences of language which is to be said or sung. Its language will be gender-inclusive'. What is striking about this is that it makes no mention of theology, no mention of the tradition, whereas it seems to me essential that a liturgical translator keep in mind at all times the theological, exegetical and liturgical tradition.

This is really the main thing that I want to stress: liturgical worship is one of the principal ways, if not the principal way, of transmitting the Tradition to the ordinary members of the Christian community. It is through the liturgical texts that the ordinary worshipper comes into contact with the theological understanding of the Tradition, as it is expressed both in Scripture and in the Fathers of the Church.

There is a very clear example in Psalm 67.16s.

MT הַר־אֱלֹהִים הַר־בָּשָׁן הַר גַּבְנֻנִּים הַר־בָּשָׁן׃
לָמָּה תִּרְצְדוּן הָרִים גַּבְנֻנִּים הָהָר חָמַד אֱלֹהִים לְשִׁבְתּוֹ אַף־יְהוָה יִשְׁכֹּן לָנֶצַח׃

LXX ὄρος τοῦ θεοῦ ὄρος πῖον, ὄρος τετυρωμένον, ὄρος πῖον. ἵνα τί ὑπολαμβάνετε, ὄρη τετυρωμένα, τὸ ὄρος, ὃ εὐδόκησεν ὁ θεὸς κατοικεῖν ἐν αὐτῷ; καὶ γὰρ ὁ κύριος κατασκηνώσει εἰς τέλος.

VUL Mons Dei mons pinguis, mons coagulatus, mons pinguis. ut quid suspicamini montes coagulatos mons in quo beneplacitum est Deo habitare? in eo etenim Dominus habitabit in finem.

KJV The hill of God *is as* the hill of Bashan; an high hill *as* the hill of Bashan. Why leap ye, ye high hills? *this is* the hill *which* God desireth to dwell in; yea, the LORD will dwell *in it* for ever.

NRSV O mighty mountain, mountain of Bashan; O many-peaked mountain, mountain of Bashan! Why do you look with envy, O many-peaked mountain, at the mount that God desired for his abode, where the LORD will reside forever?

De Vinck and Contos have a decidedly capitalist understanding of the first part of this passage,

> The mountain of God is a rich mountain,
> a fertile mountain, a wealthy mountain.

In the opening phrase, the NRSV, with most modern scholars, treats the Hebrew אֱלֹהִים, 'God', as equivalent to an adjective meaning 'great' and translates הַר־אֱלֹהִים as 'Mighty mountain'. The *Liturgical Psalter*, which is often bound up with the ASB, takes the same view, but this is not the view of any of the Fathers or the writers of the liturgical texts.

The LXX and St Jerome both translate 'mountain of Bashan' in the Hebrew by 'fat mountain', not unintelligently, since Bashan in the Bible is often a symbol of fertility. This makes very good sense coupled with 'curdled'. The references in the liturgical texts to the Mother of God as the 'fat [πῖον] mountain' are also to this Psalm. I think that in English 'fertile' conveys the sense better than 'rich', which is used by some translators, including Fr Lazarus Moore.

In the next phrase, the KJV translates a rare Hebrew word, which only occurs in these two verses in the Bible, by 'high'. Modern translators prefer

'many-peaked', or something similar, but the LXX, followed by the Vulgate, has 'curdled' [τετυρωμένον][10] This is not as odd as it may appear, since the Hebrew word גַּבְנֹן [*gavnon*] is certainly cognate with the word for 'curd' or 'cheese', גְּבִינָה [*gevinah*]. The interpretation of this expression 'the mountain of God is a fat mountain, a curdled mountain' was not easy. St Augustine, writing before the Council of Ephesus formally ascribed the title 'Theotokos' to the blessed Virgin, says that it refers to 'the Lord Christ'[11], but from as early as the sixth century it was taken in the East to be an image of the Incarnation, because the growth of the foetus was believed by ancient medicine to be the result of the solidifying of the mother's blood by interaction with the male seed, a sort of 'curdling' process. Job uses precisely this image of himself, 'Did you not pour me out like milk, and curdle me like cheese?' [10.10 KJV] The word translated by 'cheese' is גְּבִינָה [*gevinah*]. In his Kontakion for Good Friday St Romanos puts this image into the mouth of Christ as he addresses his Mother on his way to the Cross:

Do not make the day of my Passion bitter,
Because for it I, the sweet one, came down from heaven, like the manna,
Not onto Mount Sinai, but into your womb.
For within it, as David prophesied, I was curdled like cheese.
ἔνδοθεν γὰρ ταύτης ἐτυρώθην, ὡς Δαυὶδ προανεφώνει·
Understand, honoured Lady, the curdled mountain.
τὸ τετυρωμένον ὄρος νόησον, σεμνή·
I now exist, because being Word I became flesh in you.
In flesh then I suffer, and in flesh I save.
Do not weep then, Mother. Rather cry out with joy,
"As he wills he accepts suffering
My Son and my God!"'[12]

The French editor of Romanos said that he had not found this exegesis anywhere else, but it is in fact found in many liturgical texts, most of which are later than Romanos and could, therefore, ultimately derive from this Kontakion. In a Lenten Canon by St Joseph the Hymnographer [9th century] we find the following:

> Τὸ βασιλικὸν ὄχημα, τὴν φαιδρὰν νεφέλην, ὄρος τὸ πιότατον, ὄρος τετυρωμένον, ἀπειρόγαμε δυσωποῦμεν, Παρθένε·
> Ἴασαι τὰ πάθη τῶν ψυχῶν ἡμῶν.
> Royal chariot, bright cloud, most fertile mountain, curdled mountain, Virgin unwedded, we beseech you: heal the passions of our souls.[13]

The Canon of the Akathist, also by Joseph, is a collection of all the types of the Mother of God in the Old Testament, and in Ode 4 we have this,

[10] However, St Jerome, when he translated the Psalter directly from the Hebrew, put 'high' [*excelsus*].
[11] 'He is himself the "curdled mountain"'.
[12] Kontakion 19,6. See *On the Life of Christ: Kontakia by St Romanos the Melodist*, translated by Archimandrite Ephrem, Harper Collins, 1996.
[13] Tuesday of the Second Week, Ode 9, First Canon, Theotokion.

> Χαῖρε, πῖον ὄρος, καὶ τετυρωμένον ἐν Πνεύματι.
> Hail, fertile mountain and curdled by the Spirit.

The *Lenten Triodion* translates this, 'Hail rich mountain flowing with the milk of the Spirit', which, I think, really misses the point of the image, because, as St Romanos puts it, the Word comes down like sweet milk, which is then 'curdled' into solid cheese.

In his fascinating book, *Rites and Ceremonies of the Greek Church in Russia*, [1772] John King wrote of Byzantine liturgical texts,

> If I was to pass judgement on the compositions themselves, I should venture to say, that, for the most part, they are a sort of rhapsody and bombast, difficult to be imitated, and scarcely possible to be reduced to common sense; this is generally allowed, even by those who esteem some of the ancient and sublime, to be the character of the most modern ones; for they are undoubtedly of different dates. The metaphors of these hymns are frequently so bold, they will not bear to be exhibited in our northern tongue.[14]

Let us then turn to a New Testament text which is used in the Liturgy: the opening of the doxology, which is of course a direct citation of Luke 2,14. In the text approved by both the ASB and ELLC, we find the following,

> Glory to God in the highest,
> and peace to his [ASB]/ God's [ELLC] people on earth.

This is, of course, Luke 2,14, but, to my knowledge, no version of the New Testament has the translation given above. The biblical evidence is as follows,

TR Δόξα ἐν ὑψίστοις θεῷ καὶ ἐπὶ γῆς εἰρήνη ἐν ἀνθρώποις εὐδοκία.

GNT Δόξα ἐν ὑψίστοις θεῷ καὶ ἐπὶ γῆς εἰρήνη ἐν ἀνθρώποις εὐδοκίας.

VUL Gloria in altissimis Deo, et in terra pax in hominibus bonae voluntatis.

DOUAI Glory to God in the highest: and on earth peace to men of good will.

KJV Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

NRSV Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favours!

There is a number of difficulties with the proposed liturgical translation. Personally I find the rhythm of the second line perfectly frightful, and the change, for reasons of political correctness, of 'his' to 'God's' in the ELLC version does nothing to improve this. Admittedly none of the currently used biblical translations is much better rhythmically, but the translation itself raises serious questions. One of the key words, εὐδοκία, has simply disappeared. To remove the idea of God's 'good pleasure', God's 'favour' and replace it with that of God's 'people' seems to me to have little to justify it. I suspect it may derive ultimately from an article by Schrenk in Kittel's dictionary, which has a strong anti-Catholic bias, the Vulgate's 'men of goodwill' suggesting salvation by works.[15] The cognate verb to εὐδοκία is the one used by the Father at the

[14] p. 66.

[15] TDNT II, 750. 'The understanding of the Latin church, namely, men who are of good will, implies legalism if a good will is regarded as decisive for salvation. … But who are the

Baptism and the Transfiguration of the Beloved Son, in whom he is 'well pleased'. This echo should surely be present in the Gloria. One of the main weaknesses, to my mind, of most contemporary liturgical translations is that they are insensitive to the echoes and cross references in the texts, particularly those to holy Scripture. Furthermore, the placing of 'on earth' at the end of the sentence is likely to be felt as modifying 'people' rather than 'earth': his people 'on earth' as opposed to 'on the planet Zorg', for example. I would here put forward a tentative suggestion for the sort of way the phrase might be translated:

> Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to those who have his favour.

The problem here for an Orthodox translator is somewhat different. The Orthodox Church in both Bible and Liturgy preserves the reading of the Greek that underlies the AV, which has a nominative, 'among men goodwill', whereas modern critical scholarship favours the genitive, 'men of good will'. There is for the Orthodox the further consideration that in a number of liturgical texts for the feast of the Nativity and elsewhere, the word 'good will', 'good pleasure' is taken to refer to the incarnate Lord himself.[16] He is the 'good pleasure of God' who now dwells among mankind. One of the texts for the feast of the Dormition makes the point quite explicitly.

> The all-blameless Bride and Mother of the Father's Good Will, foreordained by God for himself as a dwelling of the union without confusion, today delivers her immaculate soul to her Maker and God.

But it is not only Scripture and its interpretation that are mediated by the liturgical texts, there are also frequent allusions to and quotations from the writings and teachings of the Church Fathers. These are of great interest and importance to the translator, even if it is seldom possible to make them evident to the listener in a translation.

The use of the Fathers by the writers of the Festal Canons is well documented in the three volumes of St Nikodemos's *Eortodromion*, but this has not been translated into English, and seems little known outside Orthodox circles, and even there it is not the most popular bedside book. Much of what follows is based on St Nikodemos.

There is a particularly interesting example from the Iambic Canon for Pentecost by St John of Damascus. In the first Ode the second troparion begins:

ἄνθρωποι? The whole race of Israel, or those specifically predestinated? … It refers eschatologically to the elect and redeemed people of God.'

[16] The following texts from Christmas Matins are clear in this respect. In St Kosmas's canon we find in Ode 7 the following troparion,

> Suddenly, at the word of the Angel, the armies of heaven cried: Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, among men Good Will, Christ, has shone out. God of our Fathers, blessed are you!"

and in Lauds the following Idiomel,

Virgin Mother of God, who have given birth to the Saviour, you have overthrown the former curse of Eve, for you have become the Mother of the Father's Good Will, carrying in your bosom God the Word made flesh. None can fathom the mystery; by faith alone we all glorify it as we cry with you and say: Lord beyond interpretation, glory to you!

Ορος βεβηκὼς ἀτρεκέστατος Λόγος.

The meaning of this is not immediately transparent and the two attempts to translate it that I have seen both get it wrong. One has

Arriving at the mountain, the Word most sure and certain

and the other

Having reached the end, the Word, who is most precise.

Standard Greek printed editions either give no diacriticals on the initial O or print the word Ὄρος, that is 'mountain'. The word should be printed Ὅρος, that is 'limit' or 'boundary'.[17] This is what the Slavonic supports. The first version therefore has been mislead by an error in the Greek text used, the second seems to overlook the fact that ὅρος is masculine, 2nd declension, not neuter, 3rd declension. Moreover to use βαίνω, 'to go', with an accusative of 'place whither' is 'bold' to say the least. The solution to the problem is that the phrase is based on a sentence in St Gregory the Theologian's Oration 30, 20, *On the Son*, [PG 36:129], where he says that the Son is called Logo~, ὅτι καὶ ὡς ὅρος πρὸς τὸ ὁριζόμενον, ἐπειδὴ καὶ τοῦτο λέγεται λόγος. ὁ γὰρ νενοηκώς,φησι , τὸν υἱόν, τοῦτο γάρ ἐστι τὸ ἑωρακώς, νενόηκε τὸν πατέρα· καὶ σύντομος ἀπόδειξις καὶ ῥᾳδία τῆς τοῦ πατρὸς φύσεως ὁ υἱός. γέννημα γὰρ ἅπαν τοῦ γεγεννηκότος σιωπῶν λόγος.

> One could say, perhaps, that [the Son's] relationship is that of definition to term defined, since "word" has the meaning in Greek of "definition". … The Son is the concise and simple revelation of the Father's nature—everything born is a tacit definition of its parent.[18]

St John's iambic line is now clear: it is a simple chiasmus, and βεβηκώς means "sure", "stable", as it does frequently in the classical language:

> The firm Definition, most precise Word,
> Brings calm perfection to the heart;
> For, his work accomplished, Christ gladdened his friends,
> With a mighty wind and tongues of fire,
> Apportioning the Spirit, as he had promised.

But this translation is not obvious unless one has found its source in St Gregory's sermon.

The study of this use of the Fathers by the hymn writers, then, can be of considerable importance for establishing the text and therefore the translation of the liturgical offices. Here are some further examples from the Paschal Canon by St John of Damascus. In the 4th Ode, the first Troparion, in the recently published version from America, reads as follows:

> Christ revealed Himself as of the male sex when he opened the Virgin's womb, and as a mortal he was called Lamb. Thus without blemish is our Pascha, for He tasted not corruption; and since He is truly God, perfect he was proclaimed.

[17] The word is also used for a conciliar 'definition', that is the 'limit' or 'boundary' beyond which lies heresy.

[18] I use the version by Lionel Whickham in *Faith Gives Fullness to Reasoning*, p.275s.

This troparion is based on Exodus 12:5 and St Gregory's second homily on Pascha [Orat. 45] and the word here translated 'mortal' should in fact be 'food'. The biblical verse reads as follows:

> It shall be for you a sheep **perfect, male,** one year old; you shall take it from the lambs or from the kids.

There is also an allusion to Exodus 13:12:

> You shall set apart everything that **opens the womb**, the **male** to the Lord.

In his homily St Gregory comments on these texts and says that the Lamb 'shall be **eaten** towards evening' [PG 36:644 ἡμῖν δὲ ὁ ἀμνὸς βρωθήσεται] and the word he uses for ' shall be eaten' is the slightly uncommon βρωθήσεται. St John in his canon uses the word βρωτός (food), which in a number of printed texts is corrupted to the more common word βροτός (mortal). The point of the Passover Lamb was that it was **eaten**, not that it was mortal. A more accurate translation might be:

> Christ appeared as a 'male' who opened a virgin womb: as our food he is called 'lamb': 'unblemished', as our Passover without stain: and 'perfect', for he is true God.

In the next troparion there is another well known crux. The same American translation reads:

> Christ, our blessed Crown, like unto a yearling lamb, of His own good will did sacrifice Himself for all, a Pascha of purification.

Here St John continues his meditation on Exodus 12:5, but he adds an allusion to Psalm 64,12, 'You will bless the crown of the year of your **goodness**'.[19] This combination St John has again taken from the same homily by St Gregory. The word for 'goodness' in the Psalm is χρηστότητος, and St John uses the corresponding adjective χρηστός ('good'). This again in many printed editions has been corrupted to the easier Χριστός ('Christ'), but it is not what St John wrote.[20] The link between the Psalm and Exodus is provided by the Greek words for 'year' and 'yearling'. St Gregory calls Christ στέφανόν τε χρηστότητος εὐλογούμενον [PG 36:641]. He also explains in the previous sentence that Christ is a yearling [ἐναύσιον] lamb, because he is the Sun of justice. The two adjectives, εὐλογούμενος and χρηστός(both qualifying στέφανος are awkward and I think the former, which has the definite article, may in fact be a title, a virtual proper name, 'the Blessed One'. This very frequent use of adjectives and participles as nouns in Greek is another ever-present problem for translators, if they are to avoid peppering their versions with the pronoun 'one'! A more accurate version of the opening of this troparion could be something like,

[19] The LXX has, εὐλογήσεις τὸν στέφανον τοῦ ἐνιαυτοῦ τῆς χρηστότητός σου. The 'year of God's goodness' is commonly taken by the Fathers to refer to the time of the Incarnation, with e reference to Luke 4,19.

[20] Incidentally, the incorrect readings in these two troparia are to be found in the current Slavonic version of this canon.

As a yearling lamb, for us a crown of goodness, the Blessed
One, the cleansing Passover has been sacrificed for all; and
from the tomb the fair Sun of justice has shone for us again.

This use of the Fathers is not confined to the canons, but it has not yet received serious attention and there is need for a great deal of work, much of which without concordances and properly edited texts will be simply hunch or reminiscence. For example part of St Gregory the Theologian's sermon on Pentecost [PG 36:435] is taken verbatim as the first sticheron for Vespers of the feast. In the same way both the Christmas and Easter Canons begin with the openings of St Gregory's sermons for the two feasts. But the Easter exordium is used more fully in the famous Doxastikon at the end of Easter Matins, which, with the omission of St Gregory's reference to himself, is simply the opening of his first sermon for Easter, with the Easter apolytikion added at the end. In the Canon St John of Damascus combines the opening of the first Easter homily with a phrase from the second [PG 36:624], Πάσχα Κυρίου, Πάσχα. The second troparion of this first Ode is a mosaic of phrases from St Gregory: from the sermon on the Nativity, on Easter and on Pentecost. One of the Doxastika for the feast of the Dormition contains a number of citations of Denys the Areopagite's book *On the Divine Names*, and examples could be multiplied from the many volumes of the service books.

But Orthodox hymnographers sometimes draw on quite surprising sources. In the eighteenth book of the Odyssey Homer describes the fight between the beggar Irus and Odysseus. Odysseus has returned to his royal palace in rags, disguised as a beggar and is challenged by the local professional beggar.[21] The suitors set up a fight between the two for a laugh, but Odysseus lays out Irus with his first blow. Odysseus is rewarded by Antinoos, as he had been promised, with what sounds a perfectly disgusting dish, 'a goat's stomach filled with blood and fat bubbling on the fire' — I imagine it was a form of haggis — and his health is then drunk by another suitor, Amphinomos, who hands him two loaves of bread and the double-handled cup of wine, with the words 'Hail, father stranger', Χαῖρε, πάτερ ὦ ξεῖνε.[22] Odysseus drinks and then compliments the young man on his kindness and good manners. He takes after his father. He then prays that Amphinomos will be able to get home before Odysseus returns to his palace, because when he does there will be bloodshed. And, he adds with heavy irony, he is not very far away. He then drinks and hands back the cup to the young man, who, Homer continues,

went back down the hall in great distress of heart,
shaking his head. For his spirit had a foreboding of evil.
αὐτὰρ ὁ βῆ κατὰ δῶμα φίλον τετιημένος ἦτορ,
νευστάζων κεφαλῇ· δὴ γὰρ κακὸν ὄσσετο θυμῷ.[23]

[21] Those familiar with Paris will know that a *clochard* who attempts to 'muscle in' on the pitch of another can expect rough treatment, particularly if the pitch in question is the porch of a fashionable church on a Sunday morning.
[22] *Odyssey* 20:199.
[23] *Odyssey* 18:154.

In the 4th Ode of his canon for Holy Thursday St Kosmas takes this passage and applies it to Judas at the Last Supper.

> Shaking his head Judas foresaw and set in motion evils, seeking an opportunity to hand over to condemnation the Judge, who is Lord of all and God of our fathers.
>
> Νευστάζων κάραν Ἰούδας κακά, προβλέπων ἐκίνησεν εὐκαιρίαν, ζητῶν παραδοῦναι τὸν Κτίστην εἰς κατάκρισιν, ὃς πάντων ἐστί Κύριος καὶ Θεὸς τῶν πατέρων ἡμῶν.

St Kosmas has not only used these lines from Homer, he has also given them quite a different meaning, or it may be that he has misunderstood Homer, as St Nikodemos certainly has in his explanation of them. The word νευστάζων is the key. It means to 'nod' or 'shake' the head and is used by Homer a few lines later to describe Irus, after Odysseus has knocked him out, sitting propped up against the gatepost, 'nodding with his head, like a drunkard'[24]. But in later Greek it is also used of an animal 'lowering' its horns to attack. How is a translator to convey the wealth of images that all this conjures up? In many such instances it is not, I think, possible to do so, without resort to wordy paraphrase, but the loss of such vivid imagery is regrettable.

There are many other problems for the liturgical translators. Should they, for example, try to preserve the rhetorical devices in which all our ancient liturgical texts abound; how sensitive should they be to questions of musical setting; to what extent should they take on board 'political correctness', in particular 'inclusive language', to name a few. So, having only scratched the surface, I will end with what the rhetors call an *inclusio*, and conclude as I began with some words from the Translators' Preface to the Reader from the 1611 Authorised version.

> "Translation it is that openeth the window, to let in the light; that breaketh the shell, that we may eat the kernel; that putteth aside the curtain, that we may look into the most holy place; that removeth the cover of the well, by which means the flocks of Laban were watered".

ARCHIMANDRITE EPHREM
Feast of the holy Martyr and Archdeacon Laurence, 1995

[24] *Odyssey* 18:239-40, ὡς νῦν Ἶρος ἐκεῖνος ἐπ' αὐλείῃσι θύρῃσιν
ἧσται νευστάζων κεφαλῇ, μεθύοντι ἐοικώς.