Book Reviews

The Psalter according to the Seventy: Greek-English. Translated by Peter A. Chamberas. Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2019. 518 pp. ISBN 978-1-935317-71-5.

The Psalter of David the Prophet and King with the Nine Odes. Translated by Nicholas Roumas. n.p. Great Light Publishing Co., 2022. 250 pp. ISBN 979-8-9861143-0-9.

The Holy Psalter with the Troparia and Prayers of the Cell Vigil. Translated by Ephrem Lash and Christopher M. Morgan. Zeeland, MI: St Ignatius Orthodox Press, 2022. 334 pp. ISBN 979-8-9865301-0-9

The Orthodox Psalter with Explanatory Notes. Translated by Silviu N. Bunta. McAllen, TX: Cherubim Press, 2022. x + 285 pp. ISBN 979-8-9860633-1-7

As part of the Bible, the Psalter or Book of Psalms has been translated into nearly two thousand languages, and translations of the Psalter in English alone are available in hundreds of versions. The impulse behind the proliferation of translations aims in part to render the psalms more intelligible, to clarify the insights of their message, and to enhance their ease of use in Christian prayer and worship. Translations are therefore responses, even if only implicitly, to the question of how fidelity to the original text might be best achieved. The optimal correlation between the text and its translation is itself an old question and has been debated for more than two thousand years. Modern theories of translation, following a distinction established in Greco-Roman antiquity, generally reduce the range of methodologies employed by translators to an opposition between literal vs. free, word-for-word vs. sense-for-sense, or formal

equivalence vs. functional (or dynamic) equivalence.[1] There is a third class of translation in which the original text is reworked into a new idiom or genre, employing extensive paraphrase and highly free and allusive renderings, in the way that James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1920) and Derek Walcott's *Omeros* (1990) respectively rework Homer's *Odyssey* and *Iliad*.[2]

The literal approach has its advantages, and its advocates claim that literal translations are "truer." For them, the meaning of a biblical passage often depends on prior intellectual, philosophical, or confessional commitments that are represented in and through the translation. A recent example of this approach may be seen in the *New English Translation of the Septuagint* (NETS), which aims to foreground the Hebrew original while relegating the Greek and English versions to the background. The editors contend that "the Septuagint aimed at bringing the Greek reader to the Hebrew original rather than bring the Hebrew original to the Greek reader. Consequently, the Greek's subservience to the Hebrew original may be seen as indicative of its aim."[3] According to the main editor of NETS, translation is a matter of reducing the Greek (or English) to its source language, insofar as the Septuagint offers little in terms of an "exegesis" or "interpretation" (theological or otherwise) of the Hebrew: "Since exposition and exegesis are by their very nature a

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[1] These methodologies have been further complicated by developments in the fields of sociolinguistics, relevance theory, discourse analysis, narrative criticism, epistemology, and related fields such as lexicography, semantics, phonemics, and aspect theory; on which, see Roger T. Bell, *Translation and Translating: Theory and Practice* (London and New York: Longman, 1993); and Mona Baker, ed., *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001).

[2] In this same class we may also place the work of the tenth-century Byzantine scholar Symeon Metaphrastes (the "Translator"), who rewrote 148 late-antique saints' lives in standard middle Byzantine Greek; cf. Christian Høgel, *Symeon Metaphrastes: Rewriting and Canonization* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2002); and, more generally, Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation* (London and New York: Routledge, 2013).

[3] Albert Pietersma and Benjamin G. Wright, *A New English Translation of the Septuagint* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), xiv. On the NETS translation of the Psalms, see ibid., 542–47. NETS appeared in 2007, with corrections and emendations published online in 2009, 2014, and 2021.

matter of contextualization, it will be obvious that, at the word or morpheme level of interpretation, little if any exegesis can occur."[4]

Such a reductive approach—which has obvious implications for the resulting English translation—appears unhappy with the very idea of translation and would seem to aspire to little more than a synoptic presentation of parallel texts in Hebrew, Greek, and English. At the same time, this approach fails to account for the *differences* between the Hebrew and the Greek, ignoring the unavoidable exigencies that impinge upon all translators. It is therefore unsurprising that this reductive model, which privileges *a priori* the Hebrew text, has met with significant criticism. In terms of the differences between the Hebrew Bible and the Septuagint as a whole, the remarks of leading Septuagint scholar Natalio Fernández Marcos are worth recalling:

> A simple comparison of the Greek Bible and the Hebrew Bible shows a series of books in the LXX that are not included in the Hebrew...and within the books included in the Hebrew canon the differences are no less important: different titles and arrangement of the various books, different sequence and contents, cases in which the LXX represents a different textual tradition or a different edition from the Masoretic text...consequently, the Bible of Alexandria cannot be considered a simple reproduction of the original Hebrew text but an autonomous literary work organized around a new constellation of meanings within the Greek system.[5]

With respect to the Book of Psalms, a related but different set of factors is well described by Eberhard Bons, editor of the *Historical and Theological Lexicon of the Septuagint* (2020–), who argues that

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[4] Albert Pietersma, "Exegesis in the Septuagint: Possibilities and Limits (The Psalter as a Case in Point)," *Septuagint Research. Issues and Challenges in the Study of the Greek Jewish Scriptures*, ed. Wolfgang Krauss and R. Glen Wooden (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006), 33–45, at 39.

[5] Natalio Fernández Marcos, *The Septuagint in Context: Introduction to the Greek Version of the Bible*, trans. Wilfred G.E. Watson (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2000), 68.

the Septuagint translation of the Psalter does not give us the perspective of the Hebrew text but rather that of the Greek translator

> …who had to grapple with a Hebrew text sometimes difficult to understand; he had to choose the elements of the Greek target language deemed appropriate to render the source text; and, last but not least, he was a member of a Greek-speaking Jewish community living in Alexandria, probably in the second century BCE. As such, he was not living in a social or literary vacuum but in a specific environment determined by social, political, and religious values, as well as political developments, legislation, administration, and education. In other words, we should not limit the role of the translator to that of a *mere* translator, supposed to have the ability of rendering a Hebrew term by its corresponding Greek equivalent. Rather, we have to think of a person able and willing to translate not only *ad litteram* but also *ad sensum,* taking into account the knowledge and cultural background of his addressees.[6]

This more nuanced approach has been central to the ongoing, multi-volume French translation of the Septuagint collectively known as *La Bible d'Alexandrie* (1986–).[7] The same approach has been adopted by the editors of the recent *Lexham English Septuagint* (2019).[8] More examples could easily be cited. For the editors

[6] Eberhard Bons, "The Septuagint Psalter: Translation, Correction, Enculturation," *Adamantius* 26 (2020): 321–30, at 322. Here, the phrases *ad litteram* and *ad sensum* correspond to the "word-for-word" vs. "sense-for-sense" methodologies mentioned above.

[7] See Marguerite Harl, "*La Bible d'Alexandrie* I: Translation Principles," *X Congress of the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies, Oslo, 1998*, ed. Bernard A. Taylor (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2001), 181–97, at 183: "The criterion for determining the meaning of words in the LXX is not the meaning of their counterparts in Hebrew. It is their meaning in the koinê, or more precisely, the sense they acquire in the context of the LXX, according to the use the translators make of them, following their choices and habits…The Greek of one passage is explained by the Greek of another."

[8] *The Lexham English Septuagint* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2019), xiii: "[This translation] focuses on the text as received rather than as produced. Every effort was made to render the Greek in its own right, with no eye to the Hebrew at all. The LES is an attempt to answer the question, 'How would this text have been read—understood and experienced—by a fourth century, Greek speaking gentile Christian?' This implied reader's

and other scholars involved in these and related projects, the Septuagint is understandable within its Greek linguistic and cultural framework without recourse to the Hebrew, which cannot be the arbiter of meaning in any simplistic way. The Septuagint—independently of any belief in divine inspiration—is a document in its own right having its own theological and literary characteristics, which are at the foundation of the New Testament and the Orthodox Christian civilization that arose from it.[9]

By using Greek translations of the Old Testament, the authors of the New Testament effectively recontextualized the Old Testament in a new theological framework and signaled the articulation of a new theology. In turn, the Greek New Testament provided a new theological hermeneutic for reading the Greek Old Testament, for which the Greek language was exceptionally well suited.[10] Greek has a much larger vocabulary and more complex syntactical structures than Hebrew; it has the ability to be more precise than Hebrew; and it has a greater facility for abstract thought, based on a sophisticated philosophical tradition that was refined over centuries. If "interpretation" is a natural consequence of translation, then it should be obvious that in the case of scriptural translation such interpretation is also "theological," introducing theological language and concepts that were not features of the original work.[11]

As the above examples suggest, the *ad litteram* vs *ad sensum* dichotomy is firmly established within the discourse of translation,

knowledge of Hebrew and Jewish customs is restricted to what could be learned from the Greek Scriptures and by observing fourth-century Jews in the Greco-Roman world."

[9] On this question, see Yuliya Minets, *The Slow Fall of Babel: Languages and Identities in Late Antique Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), who describes the process through which Greek Christian intellectuals absorbed linguistic differences into a monolingual cultural and religious system as part of the larger process of Christian identity formation.

[10] Here we may take the reading sequence of Abba Sisoes as paradigmatic: "I read the New Testament, and I turn to the Old," trans. Benedicta Ward, *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers* (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1984), 219 (Sisoes, § 35).

[11] For studies illustrative of this process, see the papers collected in Johann Cook and Martin Rösel, *Toward a Theology of the Septuagint: Stellenbosch Congress on the Septuagint, 2018* (Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2020).

with translators taking their stand on one side or the other. While this distinction admittedly serves as a helpful heuristic device, in actual practice the dividing lines between these two approaches are necessarily fluid and often blurred.[12] But whether employed separately or in combination, these approaches in themselves are limited in terms of their ability to address the challenges that translators must confront when translating Scripture and in particular the Book of Psalms.[13]

The first and most obvious challenge is that, for believers, "All Scripture is inspired by God" (2 Tim 3.16), posing a nearly impossible task for translators. In the case of the Septuagint version of the Psalms, these challenges are compounded since the text to be translated is itself a translation (from Hebrew into Greek), and indeed a translation that itself is said to be inspired, a belief found already in Philo of Alexandria, for whom the Greek and Hebrew texts were equivalent.[14] In theory, this should not be a problem for an Orthodox Christian translation of the Psalter, since the Septuagint is the received Bible of the Orthodox Church, beginning with the New Testament, which contains more than 100 quotations from the Greek Psalter.[15] Nevertheless, the challenges of translating an inspired text—a written representation of divine revelation—are by no means insignificant and can lead, for example, to notions of

[12] As argued by Theo A. W. van der Louw, *Transformations in the Septuagint: Towards an Interaction of Septuagint Studies and Translation Studies* (Leuven: Peeters, 2007); James Barr, *The Typology of Literalism in Ancient Biblical Translations* (Göttingen: Vendenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1979); and Edward W. Glenny, *Finding Meaning in the Text: Translation Technique and Theology in the Septuagint of Amos* (Leiden: Brill, 2009).

[13] For a general introduction to these challenges, see the essays collected in Glen G. Scorgie, Mark L. Strauss, and Steven M. Voth, *The Challenge of Bible Translation: Communicating God's Word to the World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003).

[14] Philo of Alexandria, *On the Life of Moses* 2.37–40, trans. F. H. Colson, *Philo,* Loeb Classical Library 6 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), 467–69. In general, the Greek Fathers of the Church share the same notion of equivalence and do not treat the Septuagint as a translation.

[15] See Mogens Müller, *The First Bible of the Church: A Plea for the Septuagint* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996); Martin Hengel, *The Septuagint as Christian Scripture: Its Prehistory and the Problem of its Canon,* translated by Mark E. Biddle (Edinburgh & New York: T&T Clark, 2002).

a "sacred language" and prohibitions on its translation and use in worship. In some religious traditions, divine revelation is given explicitly in a particular language and cannot be translated. For others, the linguistic monopoly serves various social and political agendas, so that translation violates the divine nature of the text and by extension the putative divinity of the nation or tribe.[16]

Further challenges arise from the fact that the Psalter is a work of poetry, the playfulness of whose form and complex aesthetic values—including sonic resonances, tonality, rhythm, and reliance on metaphor—are arguably untranslatable, since meaning can never be wholly separated from expressive form. "Poetry," in the words of Robert Frost, "is what gets *lost* in translation."[17] A closely related challenge is the Psalter's use in Christian liturgical settings. The Old Testament was received by the Church as a *liturgical* text, which has little to do with the printed or digitized "Bible" familiar to us today, but instead was represented through lengthy excerpts recited at public worship, organized through a lectionary system, in which the entire Psalter was read once every week.[18] The liturgical setting, moreover, is also a musical setting. True to its original musical form,

[16] On this question, see Nomikos M. Vaporis, *Translating the Scriptures into Modern Greek* (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1994); and Stephen K. Batalden, *Russian Bible Wars. Modern Scriptural Translation and Cultural Authority* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013). Vaporis notes that initiatives to produce a vernacular translation of the Scripture were strongly opposed by the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Church of Greece. The Russian Orthodox Church had similar reservations but eventually reversed course in the mid-nineteenth century and produced an official, modern Russian translation. On the tendency of elite groups to maintain their hold on power through the use of a language or dialect peculiar to themselves, see Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, vol. 1, ed. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 225, 395–98, 500–506, 508–509.

[17] Cited in Robert A. Welch, "The Translation of Poetry: Some Principles," *Irish Quarterly Review* 16 (1972): 326–42, at 326.

[18] See the remarks of Günther Zuntz, "Das byzantinische Septuaginta-Lektionar ('Prophetologion')," *Classica et Mediaevalia: Revue danoise de philologie et d'histoire* 17 (1956): 183–98, at 183, cited in James Miller, "The Prophetologion: The Old Testament of Byzantine Christianity?" in *The Old Testament in Byzantium*, ed. Paul Magdalino and Robert Nelson (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2010), 55–76, at 55–56; see also, in the same volume, Georgi R. Parpulov, "Psalters and Personal Piety in Byzantium," 77–105.

the Psalter, which means "a stringed instrument," continues to be chanted in the Orthodox Church—inspired partly by the revival of melodious psalmody introduced on Mount Athos by Elder Aimilianos at the monastery of Simonopetra.[19] Outside of ecclesiastical and liturgical settings, the psalms have inspired artists and composers across the musical spectrum, from the Jamaican reggae deejay Prince Far I's 1975 album, *Psalms for I* (nine psalms); the Irish rock band U2's 1983 song "40 (How Long)" (with lyrics adapted from Psalm 40); Sinéad O'Conner's 2007 double-disc collection *Theology,* which contains multiple psalm-inspired songs (and other Bible passages); to say nothing of Thomas Tallis, Purcell, Handel, Brahms, Rachmaninoff, Benjamin Britten, and Arvo Pärt, all of whom composed musical settings for various psalms. Thus, and perhaps more than any other book of the Bible, the Psalms present a series of challenges—theological, literary, poetical, liturgical, and musical—that are difficult to render successfully in any single translation.

In light of these remarks, I offer the following review of four recent translations of the Greek Psalter. These Psalters, apart from their contents, share a number of common features. They have all been produced or prepared by Orthodox translators; they are all specifically intended for use in Orthodox liturgy and worship; and they all appeared within a four-year period, one of them in 2019, and the other three in 2022.[20]

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[19] Dimitri Conomos, "Elder Aimilianos on the Psalter and the Revival of Melodious Psalmody at Simonopetra," in *Meditations of the Heart: The Psalms in Early Christian Thought and Practice: Essays in Honour of Andrew Louth*, ed. Andreas Andreopoulos, Augustine Casiday, and Carol Harrison (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), 277–97. The first edition of Simonopetra's *Ψαλτήριον Τερπνόν (The Joyful Psalter)* appeared in 1991; see also the Elder's commentary on select psalms: *Psalms and the Life of Faith*, trans. Maximos Constas (Athens: Indiktos, 2011).

[20] For a review of ten English translations of the Septuagint Psalter published between 1966 and 2008, see Peter Galadza, "Translating the 'Septuagint' Psalter into English for use in Byzantine Christian Worship: The State of the Question and Several Proposals," in *Studies on the Liturgies of the Christian East*, ed. Steven Hawkes-Teeples, Bert Groen, and Stefanos Alexopoulos (Leuven: Peeters, 2013), 59–100.

The Psalter according to the Seventy: Greek-English. Translated by Peter A. Chamberas. Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2019.

This is without a doubt the most aesthetically pleasing of the four Psalters under review in this essay, and the only one to include the Greek text. Designed by Fr Michael Monos of NewRome Press, this is a large, hardback volume bound in a gold-embossed, red-leatherette cover, with handsome, blue-patterned endpapers and three different-colored marker ribbons. The volume contains a Preface (pp. xi–xiv); an Introduction (pp. xv–xxi); the facing-page Greek text and English translation of the psalms (pp. 2–413); the nine matutinal odes (pp. 414–61); and concludes with a series of Endnotes (pp. 463–516) that summarize the content and basic themes of each psalm.

The translator states that his aim was to "produce an Orthodox Psalter to serve the devotional and liturgical purposes of the Church" (p. xi). Acknowledging the large number of English translations of the psalms and the difficulty in justifying yet another translation, he states that he has "carefully consulted the many fine existing editions, and in some cases [has] retained certain familiar phrases," which are "used and understood in the Orthodox Church today" (p. xii). Unfortunately, none of the consulted translations ("editions") are cited, and one assumes that "what is used and understood in the Orthodox Church today"—presumably the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese—is based on anecdotal evidence. The translator further states that: "In this specific effort for a clear and faithful English text of the psalms, the Tradition and the living experience of the Church for over two thousand years have provided…the theological and liturgical resources to guide and inform the research of this project" (p. xii). Here, some examples would have been helpful in illustrating the translator's actual method, but none is provided. The translator further claims that "every effort has been made to use all available resources in biblical studies, patristic studies, and

all extant translations of the psalms in English" (p. xiii), but, again, none of these studies or resources is cited.

Much is made of the arrangement of the psalm verses into short poetic units, which is said to "correspond faithfully to the mind of the Church and the best available biblical scholarship" (p. xii), though no such scholarship is ever cited, and the arrangement of the verses largely corresponds to what is found in most Christian Bible translations. Some early Byzantine manuscripts of the Psalter copy each verse or pair of verses as a separate line of text, but these verses are not divided like the modern poetical division found in Bibles today. By the middle Byzantine period, a verse-by-verse arrangement of the text became the exception rather than the rule, making it difficult to argue that such an arrangement "corresponds to the mind of the Church."[21]

Altogether, we are told very little about the actual method or process whereby this translation was made. However, the translator states repeatedly that his translation aims to be both "clear *and* faithful" (p. xii); both "readable *and* faithful" (p. xiii); that is, "faithful to the Greek text *but also fluid enough* in following proper English usage and helping the reader enter directly into the heart of the psalms as devotional prayers of believers" (p. xiii) (emphasis added). We may surmise from these statements that a combination of methodologies has been employed in an attempt to mediate between "letter and spirit"—that is, to balance "faithfulness" to the Greek text with the need for appropriate modification of the text in the interests of clarity, readability, and ease of use in worship. If the balance here seems to rest, not on a clearly articulated and consistently employed set of rational principles, but on the subjective and anecdotal experience of the translator, this should not be surprising. Translation, and in particular the translation of literary and poetic texts, can never be a simply mechanical exercise or reduced

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[21] On this question, see Georgi R. Parpulov, *Toward a History of Byzantine Psalters ca. 850–1350* (Plovdiv: n.p., 2014), 67 (an open-source licensed ebook, available at https://archive.org/details/ByzPsalters).

to a single "scientific" theory or method. Instead, translation is necessarily a selective, impressionistic, and highly intuitive process, to which translators bring an unconscious and often inaccessible range of principles, preconceptions, and other subtle cerebral procedures, qualified by levels of literacy and education, personal experience, and memory, all of which contribute to the generation of an always *incomplete* product. If this were not the case, why else would there be so many translations?[22] Needless to say, how well one performs the task of mediation, and how it may most suitably be judged, are separate questions.[23]

The Psalter of David the Prophet and King with the Nine Odes. Translated by Nicholas Roumas. n.p. Great Light Publishing Co., 2022.

This book appears to have been privately published. It contains an English translation of the psalms (pp. 7–194); the nine matutinal odes (pp. 195–212); and a miscellany of "Other Odes" and "Selections for Feasts" (pp. 213–44).[24] On the final page (which is not given a number), the "Translators Note" indicates that the translation is based on the "Greek text found in current editions" published by the Church of Greece, along with "several older publications of the Greek Psalter consulted for comparison." The translator states that he has followed the "interpretation and exposition of the Psalms in the writings of the holy Fathers," and consulted "Hebrew texts of

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[22] A thesis compellingly argued by George Steiner, *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

[23] To make a judgment based solely on Psalm 1.1, the translator's decision to depart from the basic meaning of the verbs for "walking, standing, and sitting" (ἐπορεύθη, ἔστη, ἐκάθισεν/*eporeuthē*, *estē*, *ekathisen*), and to render them instead as "taking counsel, following, and keeping company," loses all sense of the dynamic progression from movement, to halting, to permanent stasis. These latter are potent and perfectly intelligible metaphors, and there is no "necessity" here for a free translation that abandons the basic language and meaning of the text.

[24] These latter are selected psalm verses typically sung at an All-Night Vigil for particular feasts.

the Bible and rabbinic sources." However, and as we saw in the case of the previous translation, these claims are not supported by any documentation, and we are told nothing about the principles underlying the translation. In fact, the translation is closely related to, and seems to be a rewording of, *The Psalter according to the Seventy of St David,* published by Holy Transfiguration Monastery (Brookline, MA, 1974).[25] In general, the rewording is limited to restyling the "Elizabethan" elements of the HTM translation into modern English usage. The HTM *Psalter* has found fairly wide use and many readers will appreciate this updated version of it.

The Holy Psalter with the Troparia and Prayers of the Cell Vigil. Translated by Ephrem Lash and Christopher M. Morgan. Zeeland, MI: St Ignatius Orthodox Press, 2022.

This Psalter is an English translation of the *Ψαλτήριον μετὰ τροπαρίων καὶ εὐχῶν ἤτοι τύπος κελλιωτικῆς ἀγρυπνίας ἐκ τοῦ κώδικος 43 τῆς Ἱερᾶς Μονῆς Παντοκράτορος (Psalter with troparia and prayers, namely, a form of cell vigil from codex 43 of the Holy Monastery of Pantokrator),* which is an edition of a late-eleventh- or early-twelfth-century Psalter published in 2004 by the Athonite monastery of Pantokrator.[26] The Lash-Morgan translation of the Pantokrator Psalter contains a Preface (pp. ix–x); Acknowledgments (p. xi); an "Introduction to the Psalms by St John Chrysostom" (pp. xiii–xxxi); an English translation of the psalms and their accompanying prayers and hymns (described below) (pp. 1–200); the matutinal odes (pp. 201–17); the "Six Psalms at Matins" (pp. 229–35); the "Eclogarion" (pp. 236–79);[27] and additional items explaining the liturgical use of the psalms.

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[25] On which, see Galadza, "Translating the Septuagint Psalter," 78-79.

[26] This edition contains a helpful introduction by Ioannis Phountoulis, pp. ιγ´–ιθ´ (xiii–xix).

[27] See above, n. 24.

The Preface states that "most of the Psalms were translated by Archimandrite Ephrem Lash of blessed memory…For the Psalms he did not translate, we used the *Brenton Septuagint* as a foundation, with reference to the scholarly *New English Translation of the Septuagint* and other approved Orthodox Psalter translations." These latter were "edited for style and consistency using the *Eastern/Greek Orthodox Bible* (EOB) translation as our general style guide" (p. x). But if the English translation of the psalms here is not new, the *Holy Psalter* is not simply a book of psalms but is in fact a prayer book making use of the psalms, and the first Greek version available in English. In this psalms-based prayer book, each of the twenty divisions of the Psalter (known as a *kathisma*) is followed by a sequence of prayers and hymns. As noted in the Preface, "these additions transform the Psalter into a structured prayer book, with hymns drawn from the *Octoechos* and prayers from the divine services and the rich library of the writings of the saints" (p. ix).

The sequence of these prayers and hymns is as follows: (1) the standard prayers of the "Trisagion"; (2) two short, penitential hymns (*troparia)* and a hymn to the Virgin (*theotokion*) taken from the *Oktoechos;* (3) the recitation of "Lord have mercy" forty times; concluding with (4) a prayer (or in a small number of cases two or three prayers). The majority of these concluding prayers are anonymous, though two are attributed to St Basil (after Psalms 8 and 84, respectively); one to St Gregory the Theologian (after Psalm 142); one to St Auxentios (after Psalm 69); and the Prayer of Manasseh (cf. 2 Chron 33.12–13) (after Psalm 63). Psalm 118 (which constitutes the whole of the seventeenth *kathisma* and is read at the weekday Midnight Service and at the service for the burial of the dead) is followed by the funerary *Evlogetaria,* followed by the standard set of prayers and hymns described above. After the tenth *kathisma* (that is, after Psalm 76, which is the midpoint of the Psalter), the following instructions are given: "At the discretion of the *Proestos* [i.e., the abbot, bishop, or presiding priest], there may be inserted here a compunctive reading; the recitation of the single-phrased

prayer, 'Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me'; or the vigil may be paused for rest and continue [i.e., with the eleventh *kathisma*] at a more suitable time of the night" (p. 100).[28]

According to Georgi Parpulov, the Pantokrator Psalter is one of the four oldest known Byzantine Psalters that include hymns and prayers, all of which date to the eleventh or twelfth century, though one of them might be even older.[29] Parpulov notes that all four Psalter manuscripts contain "mostly the same prayers in almost the same order," though none of them appears to be direct copies of the others. These Psalters were designed for monks in coenobitic monasteries, to be used during the vigil held by each monk in his cell after Compline, though one of them, which contains additional prayers and texts, appears to have been designed for a solitary.[30] This is clear from the Pantokrator manuscript, which at the outset is identified as a "Psalter with hymns and prayers, namely, a form (*typos*) of cell vigil, conducted in the monastery or by those living alone in cells. Note that at the end of the eleventh *kathisma* or at the end of the twentieth *kathisma,* or elsewhere, the vigil may be interrupted by a pause, a reading, or the recitation of the single-phrased

[28] Here I have modified Morgan's translation, which does not follow the Greek text very closely and incorrectly renders "compunctive reading" (κατανυκτικὴ ἀνάγνωσις, *katanyktikē anagnōsis*) as "all-night reading." Note, too, that the Jesus Prayer, in a phrase omitted by Morgan, is described as a "single-phrased prayer" (μονολόγιστος εὐχὴ, *monologistos euchē*), which is an ancient designation for the Jesus Prayer and appears in the writings of Elias Ekdikos, which are exactly contemporary with the Pantokrator Psalter; cf. *Philokalia* 3:44–45 (nos. 94 and 104).

[29] I.e., a Sinai Psalter which bears the title: *Psalter with Troparia and Prayers for the Day and Night* (Sinai Greek codex 40); cf. Georgi R. Parpulov, *Toward a History of Byzantine Psalters*, 103–116. Parpulov notes (p. 103, n. 5) that the reading of prayers between *kathismata* is attested in the ninth-century *Life of St Athanasia of Aegina.* One of these four Psalters, which is at Harvard's Houghton Library, has been studied by Jeffrey C. Anderson and Stefano Parenti, *A Byzantine Monastic Office, 1105 AD. Houghton Library, MS gr. 3* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2016), see especially pp. 260–73 (= "The Greek Liturgical Psalter and its Typology").

[30] Parpulov, *Byzantine Psalters*, 111; the Psalter in question here is the Harvard manuscript; for a detailed description of its contents, see Anderson and Parenti, *Byzantine Monastic Office*, 273–353.

prayer according to one's ability."[31] This rubric was ommitted from the *Holy Psalter,* which is intended for a general audience and not exclusively for monks and solitaries. Even so, most laymen will not have the time to read the entire Psalter over the course of a single evening, but smaller sections can easily be read throughout the day and week.

The Orthodox Psalter with Explanatory Notes. Translated by Silviu N. Bunta. McAllen, TX: Cherubim Press, 2022.

The translator of this Psalter is surely the most self-conscious of the translators reviewed here, and the one who has thought most searchingly about a theory or philosophy of biblical translation. As the title indicates, the translation of the psalms shares equal billing with a lengthy set of notes and commentary, totaling nearly seventy pages, in which the author sets forth his theory of translation. These notes, which display deep learning, make a significant contribution to the study of the Psalter and will be especially helpful for those interested in studying the Hebrew text of the psalms. But whereas the three translations reviewed above consider the Psalter as understandable within its Greek linguistic and cultural context without recourse to the Hebrew, the *Orthodox Psalter with Explanatory Notes* presents the Greek text (and by extension its English translation) as a slavish translation of the Hebrew, and thus is subject to the criticisms outlined earlier in this essay. This latter approach renders a felicitous translation impossible from the outset. It is a truism of translation that the most literal method produces the least literary translation, as the following examples demonstrate:

"What for did nations rage, and were peoples thoughtful of empty things?" "What for do you love vanity and wickedness?" "What for have you forsaken me?" "You will destroy all who speak lie"; "Be risen, O Lord, in your wrath"; "A pit he cut out and dug it up";

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[31] *Ψαλτήριον μετὰ τροπαρίων καὶ εὐχῶν* (Pantokrator, 2004), 1.

"What is the human, that you remember him?" "He lurks to snatch away a poor, to snatch away a poor by dragging him"; "Save me, O Lord, for a venerable one is fading away"; "The Lord is my firmness"; "Day belches out word to day"; "I walked in my unwickedness"; "I saw an impious lifted up highly"; "My tears became a bread to me"; "And a human, in honor being, did not understand"; "More thoroughly wash me from my lawlessness"; "Then you will well-will sacrifice of righteousness"; "Shelter me from a twister of evil-doers"; "Save me from mud, so that I do not get stuck"; "Upon you I leaned from stomach"; "And I took up to know; this is toil in front of me"; "They set their signs, signs, and did not know, as though into their going-in above"; "Magnitude of sound of waters, a voice gave the clouds"; "You well-willed your land, O Lord"; "Your throne—prepared from then on, you are from the age"; "Will voice and will speak righteousness, will speak all who work lawlessness?" "Rivers will clap with the hand together"; "Did not dwell in the midst of my house one who does pride"; "Who redeems your life from rotting, who crowns you with mercy and pities"; "Confess to the Lord, for he is kind, for to the age his mercy"; "With you—the rule on the day of your power, in the brightness of your holies"; "From the stomach before the morning star," etc.

This kind of literalism is self-defeating and demonstrates that no one can translate both literally and well. While renderings such as these might be useful for highlighting the features of Hebrew grammar and syntax, they come at the cost of readability, elegance, and proper English usage, which many will consider too high a price for a Psalter designed for liturgical use in English-speaking Orthodox churches. If we understand the task of the translator as poised between the impulse to create a mirror-text or facsimile of the original and the need to convey the meaning of the source-language in the receptor-language, then the goal cannot be to maintain the source-language in a kind of artificial stasis but rather to transpose it into a new linguistic medium, a new semantic system, that

organizes reality in its own manner and thus bridges the gaps that exist between all languages.

Translating is a difficult task under any circumstances. "Pity the poor translator," Fr Ephrem Lash once told me: "No matter what he does, everything is wrong." Translations, moreover, are always interpretations—in many languages "translation" and "interpretation" are one and the same word. And there is no translation without loss to the original. Translating *The Divine Comedy* into the English equivalent of Italian rhymes is not advisable—unless one wants Dante to sound like Dr Seuss. But a good translation, and even a great translation, is one in which, though much may be lost, a great deal is gained. A good translation will not always be literally accurate, because translation is not simply the transcription of foreign phrases and idioms, but endeavors to convey from the original language what *can* be conveyed and incorporate it in a unified literary work in a new language. Speaking in tongues, as it were, has always been controversial, but that the *Word became flesh* (John 1.14) provides us with an elegant, perichoretic model in which meaning can be incarnate in new forms. To invoke a theological principle, the *logos* of the original language must be preserved as much as possible, but only in a proper *tropos* or "mode of being" in the new language that brings about a true exchange of idioms.

—Maximos Constas

Nikolaos Loudovikos. *Analogical Identities: The Creation of the Christian Self. Beyond Spirituality and Mysticism in the Patristic Era*. Turnhout: Belgium, 2019. pp. xv + 386. ISBN 978-2-503-57815-6.

Jaroslav Pelikan is said to have remarked that each half of the ancient Church produced one truly outstanding genius, Origen in the East and Augustine in the West. The difference, he added, was that the East had the good sense to disavow its own genius.