

The Liturgical Books

In order to be able properly to perform one's ministry as a chorister or reader (whether set apart or not) it is important to understand the structure of the services. To be an aid to the worship of God by his people, it is helpful to know what is to be read or sung, where it is to be found, in which tone it is to be sung, and where it comes within the service. In order to do this, a familiarity with the liturgical books of the church is necessary.

The liturgical books which deal with the daily cycle of services (Vespers, Matins, the Hours, the Divine Liturgy and so forth), may be divided into two main groups:

- Those which contain the services in their basic structure, with all of the unchanging hymns and prayers in order.
- Those which contain the variable hymns and prayers, which are inserted into the relevant points of the services and are selected according to the feast or season.

(In addition, there is the Book of Needs, commonly called by its Russian name of the "Trebnik", which contains occasional services – baptisms, weddings, funerals, molebens, &c. – that do not form part of the daily cycle of services.)

The first group contains two main books:

- **The Euchologion** – containing the various forms of Divine Liturgy as used by the priest and deacon, and usually used by the priest on a stand near the Holy Table.
- **The Horologion** – containing Vespers, Matins, and the lesser services of the daily cycle, such as the Hours and Compline. (Some editions of the Horologion also contain the choir's text of the Divine Liturgy.)

(The priest's texts for the services of the Euchologion and Horologion may also be found in any of a number of books, each called a sluzhebnyk. This is a pocket-sized book with one or more services, designed for ease of use by the clergy during the service.)

The second group contains four main books:

- **The Menaion** – Each day of the solar portion of the church calendar has at least one saint or feast that determines the texts to be used at the variable parts of the services on that day. The complete collection of daily texts for the full year is arranged by month, and so is called the Menaion. The set of texts for the round of services over the course of a day, in honour of a saint/feast, begins with Vespers and concludes with the Divine Liturgy, and is referred to as the "menaion service" for that saint/feast. So, for instance, the menaion service to St Elisabeth will contain all of the variable hymns that are

to be inserted into vespers, Matins, and the Divine Liturgy on St Elisabeth's feast (the 5th of July), as well as any scriptural readings appointed for the day.

As new saints are being glorified all the time and as there is no universal Orthodox calendar, there will never be a complete menaion. However, extensive editions of the menaion are available for purchase as 12-volume sets, and can run into the triple figures in cost. However, menaion services for individual feasts and saints can be acquired separately as loose-leaf publications, and many, such as those to some of the saints of the British Isles, are available online. In addition, the menaion services for those of the great feasts that have a fixed date in the solar calendar have been published together in English in a separate volume, by the St Tikhon's Seminary Press, under the title *The Festal Menaion*.

At any given service, the texts from the menaion for the day will either supersede or will be combined with the texts from one or more of the books below.

- **The Octoechos** - Each day of the week, from Sunday to Saturday, has its own special theme: The Resurrection on Sunday, the Holy Angels on Monday, St John the Baptist on Tuesday, and so forth. These themes are represented in the texts of the daily services over the course of a week. This weekly cycle is repeated with different texts each week over the course of eight weeks, beginning with the Sunday after Pascha, and continuing until the eight-weekly cycle is begun again. Each set of texts for a given week is sung in a particular tone, from tone 1 to tone 8. The book containing these texts is called the Octoechos, which can be reasonably translated as "The book of eight tones".

This represents the mystical number 8. In Old Testament times, the number 7 was understood as a number of wholeness, completion, and perfection. The Genesis Creation account speaks of God creating the earth in six days and resting on the seventh day, which he blessed and made holy, and Orthodox Christians still keep Saturday as set apart. Some versions of the Hebrew text of Genesis 1 structure the numbers of words in phrases and sentences according to the number seven and multiples of seven. Naaman was instructed to lower himself seven times in the River Jordan for healing. Noah took seven males and seven females of each clean animal into the ark when the earth was renewed. There are numerous examples. Yet, in the New Covenant in Christ, we are not content to remain at this seventh day in our current existence, but we look forward to the Eighth Day of the New Creation: eternal life in Christ. This is symbolised in the season of Pentecost (literally, "fifty days"). We celebrate the Resurrection of the Lord at Pascha, and our celebration of the paschal mysteries of his Resurrection and Ascension continues for 49 days, which is a period of exactly seven weeks, each of seven days (7 x 7) – in the

Old Covenant, the ultimate symbol of perfection. Yet, for Christians, the day after this week of weeks – Pentecost – is the Eighth Day, and a sign and promise of what we affirm when we say in the Creed that we look forward to the age to come. Since ancient times, the Church has ordered its worship according to this principle of eight, to remind us that our worship calls us beyond this life and actualises our hope for the age which we expect.

The Complete Octoechos is available from the St John of Kronstadt Press as a four-volume set, although other, better, translations do exist, such as that by the Monastery of the Veil. Sadly, these are not as readily available.

- **The Lenten Triodion** – The texts of the Octoechos play a less prominent role in the services as we approach the lenten fast. From the preparatory weeks prior to the commencement of Lent up until Holy Saturday, these are largely replaced by special hymns and prayers found in the Triodion. (This volume gets its name from the simple fact that most of the canons appointed to be prayed at various services during the period that it covers contain only three odes instead of the usual eight.) The Lenten Triodion is published in English as a companion volume to the Festal Menaion.
- **The Pentecostarion** – The texts of the Octoechos continue to play a diminished role after Pascha and throughout the season of Pentecost. During this time, the variable texts of the services may be found in a volume called the Pentecostarion, the name of which is self-explanatory.

Because the use of the Pentecostarion and the eight-weekly cycle of the Octoechos are both determined by the date of Pascha, the two always operate in harmony. Therefore, editions of the Pentecostarion usually incorporate the relevant texts from the Octoechos for those few weeks for ease of use.

There are two editions of the Pentecostarion available in English. The one published by the St John of Kronstadt Press is the better of the two for the purposes of our parish. While the form of English is an unfortunate choice, it is complete and gives detailed rubrics according to Russian Orthodox usage. The edition published by the Holy Transfiguration Monastery in Massachusetts uses a more palatable form of English but reflects Greek usage, which differs from Russian usage in both text and rubrics in a number of places. It also contains pointing for the various hymns according to Byzantine chant, which can be quite confusing for somebody who is using a different form of Orthodox chant, such as the Russian tones in use at our parish.

In addition to the above, there are the scriptural books, of which there are four:

- **The Prophetologion** – This contains the readings from the Old (and occasionally, the New) Testament, appointed to be read at Vespers on feasts of a certain rank. To date, no edition of the Prophetologion has been published in English. Instead we take the readings directly from the Bible, for which it is best to use a translation from the Greek Septuagint, which is the text used by the Orthodox Church. The *Orthodox Study Bible*, the *Eastern Orthodox Bible*, and the *New English Translation of the Septuagint* are all quite acceptable for this purpose, although it must be noted that the last of these retains the Greek forms of proper names which have long become established in English under the Hebrew forms. It would be beneficial for the reader to make adjustments as necessary.
- **The Psalter** – The Psalter features heavily in Orthodox worship. The psalms are grouped together in the sections which are appointed to be read at Vespers and Matins. Each section is called a "kathisma". In addition, psalm verses are often called to be read between the verses of communion hymns and at other times.

A few Orthodox psalters are available in English. The Book of Psalms from any of the Bible versions listed under the Prophetologion would be quite acceptable as Septuagint translations.

The best of the texts published separately as a psalter is by far the original translation of Archimandrite Lazarus (Moore). It keeps a traditional flavour without sounding archaic, due to sensitive use of contemporary English forms, rendering the text in imaginative but dignified ways that convey the meaning of the text as traditionally understood by the Orthodox Church. This is available online from synaxis.info and is the version used in the original Jordanville Prayer Book, now published by the St George Orthodox Information Service here in Britain. In addition, his re-working of the translation into modern English, which is perhaps less felicitous in places but still good, is available from the Father Lazarus Moore Foundation.

Another good translation is that of Michael Asser, which is based on the psalter of the King James Bible but corrected on all points where the King James text deviates from the Septuagint. This was to be published by the Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies but the actual published text is the result of editing that was done without the translator's knowledge or consent. The resultant volume is nonetheless beautifully produced and, unlike Fr Lazarus' translation, contains the biblical odes of the canon. For those who desire this original text by Michael Asser, this may be downloaded as a PDF from the *Orthodox England* website.

Another translation is *A Psalter for Prayer*, translated by David James and published by Holy Trinity Monastery in Jordanville. This takes a similar corrective approach to the Asser translation but uses the psalter of Miles Coverdale as a starting point.

Finally, there is the *Psalter According to the Seventy*, published by the Holy Transfiguration Monastery in Massachusetts.

- **The Epistle Lectionary and Gospel Book** – These are two books – one with the New Testament readings and the other with the Gospel readings for use at the Divine Liturgy – but they are usually published as a set so are treated together here. Both books exist in English in a number of translations.

Apart from translation, the main difference to look out for is the manner in which the readings are laid out. The Greek versions are very much clearer in this respect, as the pericopes (that is, the set portions of scripture) are printed with their own headings ("Wednesday in the 15th week after Pentecost", for instance), in sequential order according to the day of the year that each is to be read. This is the method that was anciently followed in the Epistle and Gospel books of the Orthodox west and which will be known to converts from the modern western churches, which have inherited this tradition. It seems by far the clearest way to lay the readings out.

By contrast, the Russian versions reflect the practice adopted by the Russian Orthodox Church of printing the entire books of the Bible in full as they appear in the Bible. Each pericope is assigned a number, which is given in the margin of the lectionary at the point in the book where the reading is to begin. In order to find the appointed reading, it is necessary to find out from the calendar which pericope number is appointed, then look up the number in an index to find the page where the pericope begins. Asterisks and other symbols inserted into the text correspond to footnotes at the bottom of each page, indicating where the readings for different days are to end. Despite the fact that this can be tedious in the extreme, (especially when two or three Epistles/Gospels are appointed to be read at a single Liturgy), and that it is very easy to read beyond the end of the appointed pericope without realising, there are those who do prefer this method due to their familiarity with it.

Our parish has books that follow both methods, and readers are free to use either.