

Sunday before the Nativity of Christ, at Vespers

The following three stikhiry for the Forefathers of Christ are found in the Slavonic Menaion for the Sunday before the Nativity of Christ, at Vespers, but are no longer used in the Greek tradition. A correspondent, a Psaltis in Athens, informs me that these texts are found in the 1843 edition of the Greek Menaia, published in Constantinople; after that, however, the hieromonk Bartholomeos of Kutlumusion on Mt Athos, revised the Menaia 'extensively and drastically', with the result that the current Greek Menaia have many differences from the Slavonic texts.¹

The English translation here presented was done from the Slavonic text, which I append for those who may wish to consult it.

There is an issue at the start of the second stikhira. This begins with a noun in the instrumental, with the meaning of 'glory'. Then we have a 3rd person plural reflexive verb, present tense, 'they clothe / beautify themselves'. Next comes an adjective in the genitive singular, 'divine, godly'; next a neuter noun which also seems to be in the genitive singular, and usually is taken to mean 'communion'. Next comes 'Adam', masculine singular nominative. Then we find a word that is presented in different forms in different editions; one has a participle, 'rejoicing', while another has a finite verb, 'rejoices'. And then there are some other words modifying 'Adam'.

In all of this, 'Adam' is the only word that can function as the subject of a verb. So it seems that the textual tradition may be corrupt, and to deal with the situation, we need to supply a subject for the plural verb, and emend the participle to a finite form; or we can emend the plural verb to a singular, and leave the participle alone. Neither solution is fully satisfactory. In this instance, since the editions at my disposal agree on the plural verb, and diverge on the participle, I have chosen to supply a plural subject, 'All the ancestors of Christ', and to change the participle to a singular finite verb. When I have access to the underlying Greek text, I will revisit this, and post whatever changes may be called for.

Constructive suggestions for improvement are welcome; please send a note to me at Bill.Churchill@utoronto.ca.

¹ Panagiotis Somalis, private message, 15 December 2005.

Mode VI [Storing up all their hope]

To the ‹very› ends of the earth
the Forefathers' memory has been revealed:
truly filled with light,
and shining with the dawn of grace.²
For Christ, the sun shining with light from above,
from afar leads the company of stars to shine ‹down› with Him,
and the birth of the God-man is revealed to be in Bethlehem.³
In faith, therefore, let us all applaud His birth,
and celebrate the praise of the Forefeast.

‹All the ancestors of God› are robed with the glory of divine communion,⁴
‹and› Adam rejoices today
as the foundation and confirmation of the wise forefathers.
Abel leaps for joy, and Enoch dances,
and Seth celebrates, and Noah ‹too› in the midst ‹of them›.
Moreover Abraham the all-praised sings together with the Patriarchs,
and now Melchisedek from above sees the birth without a father.
For this reason, as even we keep the memory of Christ's forefathers,
we pray that our souls be saved.

The company of the ‹Three Holy› Youths⁵, wise in God, is radiant with joy,
and proclaims the birth of Christ on earth:
Indeed, the Lord, descending like the pure dew ‹in the furnace›⁶,
preserved in honor⁷ her who bore Him,⁸
kept ‹her› pure,
and enriched ‹her› with divine gifts⁹.
At this, Daniel, the man pleasing to God, especially rejoices with gladness,
for he revealed in prophecy the stone from an uncloven mount;
now he approaches ‹Christ› with boldness to pray for our souls.

² Cf. 2 Peter 1:19 for somewhat similar language.

³ St Matthew 2:1-11

⁴ Cf. stikhira Mode II O House of Evfratha, in Slavonic, for somewhat similar language.

⁵ Literally, 'furnace-children'.

⁶ Daniel 3:50 LXX: 50 καὶ ἐποίησε τὸ μέσον τῆς καμίνου ὡσεὶ πνεῦμα δρόσου διασυρίζον, καὶ οὐχ ἦψατο αὐτῶν καθόλου τὸ πῦρ καὶ οὐκ ἐλύπησε καὶ οὐ παρηνώχλησεν αὐτούς; *Slavonic*: ἡ ἱστανορὴ ἐρέδνεε πέμψη ἱάκω ἀρχζ ροσιὲ ψδμάμψ: ἡ νε πρικοσιδεα ἡχζ ὠηιάδζ ὄγνη ἡ νε ὠκορβη, ηηζέ ετδζκη ἡμζ. [<http://www.orthlib.ru/bible/index.html> 2005-1215-0210Z]. 'And he [= the Angel of the Lord] made the midst of the furnace like a whistling wind of dew, and the fire did not touch them at all, nor did it vex them, nor did it trouble them.'

⁷ Literally, 'not-blemished', 'not dishonored'.

⁸ 'The having-borne', fem. sing.

⁹ Cf. first Nativity Canon, Ode VI.

Стіхѣры стѣхъ оцѣвъ, глаголю. Подобенъ: Ксе ѿложше:

Ивѣла міра концѣмъ прѣоцѣвъ пѣмать, * свѣта ѿстѣннѣ ѿполнѣна,
и зарѣмнѣ блгодѣти сѣющи: * хрѣтоу бо сѣнце свѣтлоу * свѣше
проеѣвъ ѿдалѣча, * свѣзда собору ведѣтъ, съ нѣмъ возсѣавшѣй, * и
рѣтвѣ бгочеловѣчноу * гавлѣтъ вѣдѣтъ вѣдлѣма быти. * всѣ оубо
вѣроу сего рѣтвѣ * блгодѣстѣнѣ плѣщѣ, лнхѣмъ * хвалѣ
предпрѣднѣстѣннѣю. **Дважды.**

Славоу оубо украшѣютѣ * бжѣстѣннѣмъ причѣстѣмъ, * адѣмъ радѣтъ *
днѣсѣ, * гѣмъ ѿсновѣнѣ и оубѣрѣдѣнѣ прѣоцѣвъ мѣдрѣхъ: *
совзыгрѣтъ же ѿвѣль, и сѣнѣмъ вѣселѣтъ, * и лнхѣтъ сѣдѣ, и нѣ
кѣпнѣ: * съ патрѣархѣ же поѣтъ ѿбраѣмъ вѣсѣвѣльнѣй, * и рождѣнѣ
бѣзъ оцѣ нѣнѣ мелхѣсѣдѣкѣ вѣдѣтъ свѣше. * тѣмъ же бжѣтѣннѣю
пѣмать хрѣтовѣхъ прѣоцѣвъ * и мѣмъ совершѣюще мѣлнѣмъ *, спѣстѣмъ
дѣшѣмъ нѣшѣмъ.

Влнѣтѣ вѣсѣло * ѿже въ пѣчѣ дѣтѣй бгѣмѣдрѣхъ собору, * и хрѣтоу
рѣтвѣ проповѣдѣтъ на землѣ: * гѣмъ бо чѣстнѣмъ роу ннзшѣдѣ гѣмъ,
* рождѣннѣю спѣсѣтъ нѣпѣлнѣмъ, * соблѣдѣтъ непорѣчнѣ, * и
ѿбогѣщѣтъ бжѣтѣннѣмъ дарѣннѣмъ. * тѣмъ же и бгѣпрѣѣтнѣй *
радѣтъ дѣннѣмъ вѣселѣтъ, * камѣнь бо ннзъ горѣ нѣсѣченѣмъ провѣдѣ
гѣмъ, * со дерзновѣннѣмъ мѣлнѣтъ * нѣнѣмъ ѿ дѣшѣхъ нѣшнѣхъ.

* радѣтъ emended from радѣтъ (Cf. Vespers & Matins, Winnipeg 1945); when the Greek text is available to me, I will revisit this form.