

SACRED MUSIC AS EDUCATION OF SOULS: THE WORK OF STEVAN ST. MOKRANJAC AS CONTEXTUALIZED THEOLOGY — AT THE OCCASION OF THE CENTENNIAL ANNIVERSARY OF HIS DEATH —

Vasilije Vranić*
St. Sava School of Theology,
Libertyville, USA

Summary: From the outset, the Christian hymnody occupied an important role in Church's worship. The hymnody served the purpose of facilitating worship by virtue of its esthetic potential. The second, and equally, important purpose of the hymnody is didactic; namely, the theological content of the hymns served as a powerful instructional tool in the church's doctrine.

The two purposes of the Orthodox hymnody are evident in the work of Stevan St. Mokranjac's work on preserving and enriching the sacred music of the Serbian Orthodox Church with original choral arrangements. I argue that Mokranjac's opus of sacred music of the Serbian Orthodox Church, which is marked by a fortunate balance between didactic power and restrained esthetic sensibility, is a noteworthy illustration of the successful process of contextualizing theology, as a means of augmented missionary efficiency.

Key words: Serbian Orthodox Church, Church music, Liturgy, hymnody, hymnography, Serbian chant, Stevan St. Mokranjac.

From the outset, the Christian hymnody occupied an important role in church's worship. It is beyond doubt that it left an indelible mark on the life of the Christian church in many different ways. Here, I will attempt to demonstrate the multifaceted purpose of Orthodox hymnody:

* vasilije.vranic@cantab.net.

1. As a potent instrument for facilitating worship by virtue of its esthetic quality and 2. Its didactic potential. I argue that these qualities of hymnody have been recognized as intrinsic to its nature. Thus they were employed widely in the Christian Church from its inception, as I intend to show from a selection of Scriptural and Patristic texts.

The present reflection on Orthodox hymnody does not pretend to be an exhaustive treatment of the subject.¹ It is rather a convenient selection of Patristic texts which point to the didactic nature of the hymnody.

The two purposes of the Orthodox hymnody are also evident in the work of Stevan St. Mokranjac's work on preserving and enriching the sacred music of the Serbian Orthodox Church with original choral arrangements. I argue that Mokranjac's opus of sacred music of the Serbian Orthodox Church, which is marked by a fortunate balance between didactic power and restrained esthetic sensibility, is a noteworthy illustration of the successful process of contextualizing theology, as a means of augmented missionary efficiency.

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It has been said that the "Christian Church was born in song."² This somewhat hyperbolic saying, however, is not without merit. Music has been part of Christian worship from the very beginning. As a matter of fact, the Gospels bear witness that hymnody was an integral part of the Last Supper, which Christians understand to be the moment of inception of the Eucharist, which is the focal point of the ecclesial life.

Both Matthew and Mark bear witness that before his saving Passion, Christ shared a meal with his disciples and then "when they had sung a hymn (ὕμνήσαντες) they went out to the Mount of Olives."³ Naturally, the hymns sung by Christ and the Apostles were ritual songs of the Hebrew people (probably Paschal Seder or similar). As Egon Wellesz argued, it would be safe to assume that the earliest Christians continued to participate in the Temple worship in Jerusalem.

¹ An impressive collection of Patristic writings on psalmody and hymnody can be found in James W. McKinnon, *Music in Early Christian Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

² Ralph P. Martin, *Worship in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B. Eerdmans, 1975), 39; James W. McKinnon, *Music in Early Christian Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 12.

³ Matt 26:30: "Καὶ ὕμνήσαντες ἐξῆλθον εἰς τὸ ὄρος τῶν ἐλαιῶν." (The Greek text of the New Testament is quoted after Nestle-Aland 28th ed. The English text follows RSV).

The scholarly consensus in the New Testament and Christian Origins studies is that Christianity had not fully distanced itself from Judaism until the Second Jewish Revolt under Bar Kohba (c. AD 132). It is now generally accepted that, in the first century, Christianity was considered to be a Messianic sect within a diverse family of Jewish sects of that time. Thus, it is safe to say with Wellesz that the Temple cantors and readers who sympathized the message of Jesus, continued their liturgical practices in the Christian milieu.

Naturally, as the Church grew among non-Jewish populations through the missionary activities of the Apostles, namely, St. Paul and his associates, the nature of worship must have changed to incorporate local practices. Yet, it would be safe to assume that the framework of Christian worship remained universal, since the newly formed Christian communities (churches) inherited teachings and worship practices that already existed in other churches.

The psalmody (hymns based on Biblical texts), however, must have received local expression in various communities throughout the *oecumene*. While liturgical texts were universal for the most part, it would be difficult to argue that the melodies employed by early Christians in Palestine were shared by their brethren in Athens or Rome. This becomes even more apparent if we take into consideration that even in the Apostolic times psalmody was not the exclusive mode of worship, but hymns composed locally for purposes of Christian worship were very much present. Apostle Paul exhorts the Christians of Colossae to "...in all wisdom teach and advise each other with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs; sing in your hearts to God with pleasure."⁴ The same is evident in a letter written by Pliny the Younger, governor of Bithynia (c. AD 111–112), to Emperor Trajan, where he describes the Christian worship as a gathering where they "...sing a hymn among themselves to the Christ, as to a god..." (*Letter 10*, 96; LCL II, 402–3).⁵

This relative diversity in the hymnody of the early Church, however, is rather indicative of its refined missionary sensitivity, but it also sheds light on its priorities. The textual and melodic diversity of the early Christian worship indicate that the Church was not primarily concerned with the esthetic aspect of its worship. The actual melodic output and melodies used were secondary to the didactic potential of psalmody and hymnody. This is evident in the letter St. Ignatius of An-

⁴ Col 3:16: "... ἐν πάσῃ σοφίᾳ διδάσκοντες καὶ νοουθετοῦντες ἑαυτοὺς, ψαλμοῖς ὕμνοις ᾠδαῖς πνευματικαῖς ἐν [τῇ] χάριτι ἄδοντες ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ὑμῶν τῷ θεῷ."

⁵ McKinnon, *Music in Early Christian Literature*, 27.

tioch (fl. c. AD 100) who wrote to the Christians in Ephesus saying that their hymns to Christ ought to be sung in “unanimity and harmonious love... so that by being harmonious in unanimity and taking your pitch from God you may sing in unison with one voice through Jesus Christ to the Father, in order that he may both hear you and, on the basis of what you do well, acknowledge that you are members of his Son.”⁶

The same emphasis on music as a didactic instrument of Christian ethos one finds in the later Church Fathers. In the fourth century, Athanasius of Alexandria identifies the “hymning of God” with “love of God.” Athanasius further says that “just as harmony creates a single concord in joining together the two pipes of the aulos (two-pipe flute, i.e., two wind-pipes share the same mouthpiece), so... reason wills that a man be not disharmonious with himself, nor at variance with himself.”⁷ At another place, Athanasius warns of the danger of neglecting the meaning of words and giving oneself up to the beauty of the melody. Athanasius considers the external beauty of hymnody only an instrument of its true purpose – to restore “harmony of the soul” (cf. *Epistula ad Marcellinum* 28; PG 27, 40) and thus bring one closer to God: “Those,” he says, “who do not recite the sacred songs in this manner, do not sing with understanding, but rather gratify themselves and incur blame... But those who sing...with the melody of the words proceeding from the rhythm of the soul and its harmony with the spirit – such as they sing with the tongue and sing also with the mind, not only for themselves, but also to benefit greatly those who would hear them.”⁸

While Athanasius was writing on the psalmody, a monastic tradition was developing in his own backyard – in the Egyptian Desert.

⁶ Ignatius of Antioch, *To the Ephesians* 4, 1–2 (Michael Holmes, ed. *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2007), 139): “ἐν τῇ ὁμοιοῖα ὑμῶν καὶ συμφῶνῳ ἀγάπῃ... ἵνα σύμφωνοι ὄντες ἐν ὁμοιοῖα, χρωμα θεοῦ λαβόντες ἐν ἐνότῃ, ἀδῆτε ἐν φωνῇ μιᾷ διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τῷ πατρὶ, ἵνα ὑμῶν καὶ ἀκούση καὶ ἐπιγνώσκῃ δι’ ὧν εὐ πράσσετε, μέλη ὄντας τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ.”; Cf. also PG 5, 733–36; AF 1, 81; McKinnon, *Music in Early Christian Literature*, 19.

⁷ Athanasius of Alexandria, *Epistula ad Marcellinum de interpretatione psalmodum* 27 (PG 27, 40A): “ὡς περ ἀρμονία τοὺς αὐλοὺς συντιθεῖσα μίαν τὴν συμφωνίαν ἀποτελεῖ, οὕτως, ... ὁ λόγος μὴ ἀσύμφωνον εἶναι τὸν ἄνθρωπον ἑαυτῷ, μηδὲ δίστασθαι πρὸς ἑαυτόν”; English translation from McKinnon, *Music in Early Christian Literature*, 53.

⁸ Athanasius of Alexandria, *Epistula ad Marcellinum* 29 (PG 27, 40D–41A): “Οἱ μὲν οὖν μὴ τοῦτον τὸν τρόπον ἀναγινώσκοντες τὰς θείας ᾠδὰς οὐ συνετῶς ψάλλουσιν, ἀλλ’ ἑαυτοὺς μὲν τέρπουσιν, ἔχουσι δὲ μέμψιν... οἱ δὲ κατὰ τὸν προειρημένον τρόπον ψάλλοντες, ὥστε τὴν μελωδίαν τῶν ῥημάτων ἐκ τοῦ ῥυθμοῦ τῆς ψυχῆς καὶ τῆς πρὸς τὸ πνεῦμα συμφωνίας προσφέρεσθαι, οἱ τοιοῦτοι ψάλλουσι μὲν τῇ γλώσσῃ, ψάλλοντες δὲ καὶ τῷ νοῖ, οὐ μόνον ἑαυτοὺς, ἀλλὰ καὶ τοὺς θέλοντας ἀκοῦειν αὐτῶν μεγάλως ὠφελοῦσιν.”; English translation from *ibid.*

Apparently the monks shared the views of their archbishop. Together with their peers in Palestine they wholeheartedly worked on developing the psalmody. In it they viewed a potent tool for carrying out the commandment of St. Paul to “pray without ceasing.”⁹ Influenced by the spiritual energy emanating from the Desert Fathers, urban Christians in the Roman Empire adopted the psalmody as a predominant mode of worship.¹⁰

At the same time, Christians outside of the Roman Empire have been independently developing their own worship practices. It is interesting to note, that music played an essential part there as well. From the third century onwards, the Syriac speaking Christianity employed hymns in religious education. Reportedly, Bardaisan, a renowned Syriac author began using hymns and metered prose to disseminate his teachings.¹¹

In the following century, Aphrahat the Persian (c. AD 270–343) used the same educational strategy. He composed twenty-three metered homilies for educational purposes of his local church.¹² The strict melodic meter of Aphrahat’s homilies, places them into the category of poetry.

⁹ 1 Thess 5:17: “ἀδιαλείπτως προσεύχεσθε”.

¹⁰ Alexander Lingas, “Music,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Byzantine Studies*, ed. E. Jeffreys, R. Cormack, and J. Haldon (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 917; Cf. James W. McKinnon, “Desert Monasticism and the Late Fourth-Century Psalmody Movement,” *Music & Letters* 75, no. 4 (1994), 505–521.

¹¹ As K. McVey noted, Bardaisan, a native of Edessa, is the “originator of *madrāšā*, a hymn composed in isosyllabic verse, which uses parallelism, rhyme, alliteration and a variety of word play to achieve its effects.” (Ephrem the Syrian, *Hymns*, trans. Kathleen E. McVey (New York and Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1989), 26).

Both Sozomen (*HE* 3. 16) and Theodoret of Cyrillus (*HE* 4. 26 and *HFC* 1. 22) mention Harmonious, son of Bardaisan, as the author of the genre. However, the scholarly majority is skeptic about the historicity of Harmonious, or in the words of McVey, “the Greek and overly appropriate name of Harmonious coupled with prevalent chauvinism of Greek Christian writers have made some suspicious of this datum.” (Ephrem the Syrian, *Hymns*, trans. Kathleen E. McVey (New York and Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1989), 26, n. 103; cf. dom B. Outtier, “Saint Éphrem d’après ses biographies et ses oeuvres,” *Parole de l’Orient : revue semestrielle des études syriaques et arabes chrétiennes: recherches orientales: revue d’études et de recherches sur les églises de langue syriaque* 4, no. 1–2 (1973), 21; Henry Wace and William C. Piercy, *A Dictionary of Early Christian Biography*, Vol. 1 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 1877), 252).

¹² NPNF² 13. 345–412; Aphrahat, “Demonstration IV” in Sebastian Brock, ed. *The Syriac Fathers on Prayer and the Spiritual Life* (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1987), 1–28; Aphrahat, “Demonstration II: On Love,” *Journal of the Society of Oriental Research* 14 (1930), 18–31; Aphrahat, “Demonstration VII: On Penitents,” *Journal of the Society of Oriental Research* 16 (1932), 43–56.

The Syriac hymnody reached its zenith with Ephrem the Syrian (AD 306–373) who composed an undetermined number of hymns to be sung in church. Moreover, there are a number of hymns, which Ephrem composed specifically for female choirs. His hymns and metered homilies are called *madrāšâ*. The name comes from the Semitic root *d-r-š* which stands for teaching and instruction. Naturally, the name of the genre betrays its true purpose, which is education and instruction of Christians. In this period, before the fourth century and the emergence of great heresies, the primary purpose of hymnody was to facilitate unity and concord of souls in worship. However, as Sebastian Brock convincingly argued, Ephrem was keenly aware of the potential the hymns have for teaching Christian doctrine.¹³ Ephrem recognized that the hymns could be more efficient vehicles of dogma than philosophical and theological definitions. As Brock says the “‘definitions’ of faith appear to confine within boundaries the boundless God,” which renders inquiries based strictly on philosophical categories intrinsically inadequate for the study of the unfathomable God. Ephrem overcame this methodological difficulty by expressing theology in poetry. As Brock says, Ephrem employs paradox and symbolism, and thus makes poetry a “far more suitable vehicle (for transmission of theology) than prose, seeing that poetry is much better capable of sustaining the essential dynamism and fluidity that is characteristic of this sort of approach to theology.”¹⁴

The instructional nature of hymnody changed in the first half of the fourth century with the emergence of Arianism, a heresy which challenged the divinity of the Son of God claiming that the Second Person of the Holy Trinity was a mere creation. From a mere cohesive tool in the life of the church and a part of worship rituals, hymnody becomes an effective weapon in theological debates. It had become a vehicle for preaching doctrines. The first use of hymnody for indoctrination on a massive scale was by Arius, presbyter of Alexandria (the heresy of Arianism was named after him), who composed a number of theological hymns, which he collected into an anthology named *Θάλασσα* (gr. “Banquet”).¹⁵

¹³ Sebastian Brock, *The Luminous Eye: The Spiritual World of Saint Ephrem*, Cistercian Studies Series, Vol. 124 (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1992), 24. K. McVey argues that Ephrem owed the mastery of *madrāšâ* to his use of the genre “to combat the heretic’s views” (Ephrem the Syrian, *Hymns*, 26).

¹⁴ Brock, *The Luminous Eye: The Spiritual World of Saint Ephrem*, 24.

¹⁵ Athanasius of Alexandria, *Epistula de decretis Nicaenis synodi* 16.3 (Athanasius of Alexandria, “De decretis Nicaenae synodi,” in *Athanasius Werke 2.1*, ed. Hans-Georg Opitz

Athanasius' younger contemporary, Basil of Caesarea, the author of the Orthodox Liturgy, is quite specific in his view of the import of hymnody for Christian worship and education of souls. According to Basil, hymnody is a gift from the Holy Spirit given to humanity for purposes of better understanding the doctrine and divine truths. The Holy Spirit, he says, "mixed sweetness of melody with doctrine so that inadvertently we would absorb the benefit of the words through gentleness and ease of hearing, just as cleaver physicians frequently smear the cup with honey when giving the fastidious some rather bitter medicine to drink."¹⁶

While placing emphasis on the doctrinal power of hymnody, Basil, however, does not neglect its cohesive nature. For him the two go hand-in-hand: "The psalmody provides the greatest of all goods," says he, "charity, by devising in its common song a certain bond of unity, and by joining together the people into the concord of a single chorus."¹⁷ Also, his younger contemporary Evagrius of Pontus, writing for purposes of instruction in worship of those living in isolation of monastic communities (free from tribulations of theological debates), says: "Pray in moderation and calm, and chant psalms with understanding and proper measure/good tempo (εὐρύθμως), and you will be raised on high like a young eagle. Psalmody lays the passions to rest and causes the stirrings of the body to be stilled; prayer prepares the mind to perform its proper activity."¹⁸

(Berlin: De Gruyter, 1940)): "ἀλλὰ τούτων ἐκπίπτοντες καὶ κατὰ τοὺς περὶ Εὐσέβιον ὑπὸ πολλῆς συνεχόμενοι τῆς ἀπορίας ἐκεῖνο λοιπὸν ἔχουσιν ὑπολειπόμενον, ὃ καὶ ἐν ἄσματι οἰς Ἄρειος καὶ ἐν τῇ ἑαυτοῦ Θαλίᾳ ὡς ἐπαπορῶν μυθολογεῖ: 'πολλοὺς λαλεῖ λόγους ὁ θεός'. ποῖον αὐτῶν ἄρα λέγομεν ἡμεῖς υἴὸν καὶ λόγον μονογενῆ τοῦ πατρὸς, ἀνόητοι καὶ πάντα μᾶλλον ἢ Χριστιανοί." English translation in McKinnon, *Music in Early Christian Literature*, 54: "But having come to naught here, and being constrained like those adherents of Eusebius within dire straits, they have left to them this one remaining argument, which Arius also fabricates as a last resort in his songs and in his 'Thalia': 'God pronounces many words; which of them then do we call the Son and Word, only-begotten of the Father?' They are fools and anything but Christians!"

¹⁶ Basil of Caesarea, *Homilia in psalmum 1* (PG 29, 212): "Τὸ ἐκ τῆς μελωδίας τερπνὸν τοῖς δόγμασιν ἐγκατέμιξεν, ἵνα τῷ προσηνεὶ καὶ λείῳ τῆς ἀκοῆς τὸ ἐκ τῶν λόγων ὠφέλιμον λανθανόντως ὑποδεξώμεθα· κατὰ τοὺς σοφοὺς τῶν ἰατρῶν, οἱ τῶν φαρμάκων τὰ αὐστηρότερα πίνειν διδόντες τοῖς κακοσίτοις, μέλιτι πολλάκις τὴν κύλικα περιχρίουσι."; English translation from McKinnon, *Music in Early Christian Literature*, 65.

¹⁷ Basil of Caesarea, *Homilia in psalmum 1* (PG 29, 212): "τὸ μέγιστον τῶν ἀγαθῶν τὴν ἀγάπην ἢ ψαλμωδία παρέχεται, οἷον εἰ σύνδεσμόν τινα πρὸς τὴν ἔνωσιν τὴν συναρμόδιαν ἐπινοήσασα, καὶ εἰς ἑνὸς χοροῦ συμφωνίαν τὸν λαὸν συναρμόζουσα."; English translation from *ibid.*, 66.

¹⁸ Evagrius Ponticus, *De oratione* 82–3 (PG 40, 1185): "Προσεύχου ἐπιεικῶς, καὶ

Yet, Basil is quite clear that, when it comes to the teaching nature of the hymnody, the emphasis lays on the understanding of doctrinal message it contains: “You have a psalm, you have a prophecy, you have the gospel precepts and the pronouncements of the Apostles. While your tongue sings, let your mind search out the meaning of the words, so that you might sing in spirit and sing also in understanding.”¹⁹

The same emphasis on the didactic character of hymnody continued to be present in subsequent Christian literature to this day. It remained very much present in church life through disciplinary prescriptions of the Canon Law. Canon 15 of the Council of Laodicea (held in fourth century) prescribes that “No others shall sing in the Church, save only the canonical singers, who shall go up into the ambo and sing from the book.”²⁰ The same Council in its Canon 59 bans “private compositions,” i.e., hymns written by general population without supervision of Church authorities, from being sung in the worship.²¹ Apparently, the spirit of these prescriptions is to limit the possibility of the hymnody being used for purposes of promoting false/heretical teachings. The hymnody of later Byzantium exhibits both didactic and esthetic aspects of the hymnody. This has been adopted by the Orthodox Churches universally. Yet, each Orthodox Church gave the hymnody an expression unique to its cultural and linguistic tradition.

The didactic character of hymnody had diminished in the past couple of centuries by the fact that the language used in some traditional and ancient Churches is not the vernacular anymore. On the other hand, contextualization of hymnody through melodic adaptation to cultural idiosyncrasies of local and ethnic churches and recent hymnic authorship (i.e., addition of new services for local saints) somewhat compensated for the loss of the didactic power of hymnody.

ἀταράχως, καὶ ψάλλε συνετῶς καὶ εὐρύθμως, καὶ ἔση ὡς νεοσσὸς ἀετοῦ ἐν ὕψει αἰρόμενος. Ἡ μὲν ψαλμωδία τὰ πάθη κατευνάζει, καὶ τὴν ἀκρασίαν τοῦ σώματος ἡρεμεῖν ἀπεργάζεται. Ἡ δὲ προσευχὴ ἐνεργεῖν παρασκευάζει τὸν νοῦν τὴν ἰδίαν ἐνέργειαν.”; English translation from *ibid.*, 59.

¹⁹ Basil of Caesarea, *Homiliae super psalmos* 28, 7 (PG 29, 304A): “Ψαλμὸν ἔχεις, προφητεῖαν ἔχεις, εὐαγγελικὰ παραγγέλματα, τὰ τῶν ἀποστόλων κηρύγματα. Ἡ γλῶσσα ψάλλετω, ὁ νοῦς ἐρευνάτω τὴν διάνοιαν τῶν εἰρημένων, ἵνα ψάλλῃς τῷ πνεύματι, ψάλλῃς δὲ καὶ τῷ νοῖ.” English translation from *ibid.*, 66.

²⁰ Council of Laodicea, Canon 15 (Mansi II. 567): “Περὶ τοῦ, μὴ πλέον τῶν κανονικῶν ψαλτῶν, τῶν ἐπὶ τὸν ἄμβωνα ἀναβαινόντων, καὶ ἀπὸ διφθέρας ψαλλόντων, ἐτέρους τινὰς ψάλλειν ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ.” English translation from NPNF² 14, 132.

²¹ Council of Laodicea, Canon 59 (Mansi II. 574): “Ὅτι οὐ δεῖ ἰδιωτικούς ψαλμοὺς λέγεσθαι ἐν τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ, οὐδὲ ἀκανόνιστα βιβλία, ἀλλὰ μόνα τὰ κανονικὰ τῆς καινῆς καὶ παλαιᾶς διαθήκης.”

The adoption of local melodic formulas into the worship of churches and their adaptation to liturgical texts play an important didactic role in the new pastoral reality, when a great number of faithful do not relate to the hymnody in the same manner the ancient Christians did, when the hymns had been composed. The archaic language and poetic images, coupled with complex doctrinal and symbolic content, present a challenge for the full understanding of the Orthodox hymnody.

Music however, as D. Gostuški argued can play an effective role in the liturgical adoption of the hymnody by worshipping people. Music, according to Gostuski, serves as a powerful cohesive force among ethnic groups in the sense that one can freely speak about “national music.” Ethnic groups create music that can be determined by its “technical terms and the feature of its musical system: choice of the music scales, relationship between the intervals, the rules of polyphony, rhythmic principles, etc.”²² Thus, in the case of Orthodox hymnody, melody serves as a powerful means of translation and appropriation of the text by the worshipping people.²³ Even a passing understanding of the general meaning of the hymns is supplemented by familiar melodies, which serve the purpose of making the hymns conducive to worship both on the personal and communal levels. On the personal level, the melody from culture helps the person relate more fully to the somewhat obscure text of the hymn, while at the same time it unites the congregation in worship. Thus, hymnody becomes *inculturated* and through such a contextualization, it still serves a didactic purpose, at least in the sense of helping the community of the faithful in attaining to the unity of mind and good liturgical order. In the words of Bishop Sava (Vuković), the beautiful, well-

²² Драгутин Гостушки, „Национални и универзални музички језик“, in *Мокрањчеви дани 1969. Зборник радова са састајанка етнолога, фолклориста и музиколога* (Неготин и Зајечар: Мокрањчеви дани и Новинска установа „Тимок“, 1969), 27.

²³ In the context of the Serbian church music, Patriarch Pavle (Stojčević) of Serbia, widely recognized as an expert in the Serbian chant, considered the hymnody as one of the most important aspects of spiritual edification of the worshipping community. Cf. Патријарх Павле, *Да нам буду јаснија нека њишања наше вере*, Vol. 3 (Београд: Издавачки фонд Архиепископије београдско-карловачке, 1998). 79; Предраг Ђоковић, „Српски Патријарх Павле о неким питањима нашег црквеног појања: црквено појање и духовно узрастање“, *Зборник Мајнице српске за сценске уметности и музику* 36 (2007), 85.

The late Bishop Sava (Vuković) of Šumadija was likewise renowned for his expertise in the Serbian church chant. He also considered hymnody as “abbreviated theology” („теологија у малом“) and, in a sense, “theological sermons and catechism.” Cf. Ненад Ристовић, „Епископ Сава Вуковић и српско црквено појање“, in *Зборник Мајнице српске за сценске уметности и музику* 48 (2013), 218 и 225–226.

structured worship with expressive and comprehensible hymnody is the “best school of piety.”²⁴

This contextualization and limited adaptation to the circumstances of life have been well carried out for the purposes of the Serbian Orthodox Church in the 19th and 20th centuries by two great composers – Kornelije Stanković and Stevan Stojanović Mokranjac. Stanković pioneered the work on the systematization of the Serbian sacred music and its liberation from the consequences of the Greek domination of the late 18th century. After his untimely death, Stevan Mokranjac continued the work.

Without attempting to venture beyond my competence into the arts of musicology, which remain arcane to me, but having an experience of over two decades as a cantor of the sacred music of the Serbian Orthodox Church who learned to sing from manuals created by Stevan Mokranjac, and being an equally long member of choirs that performed his compositions, I dare say a few words on the magnificent service his work provided to the Serbian Orthodox Church. By contextualizing and appropriating the Orthodox hymnody to the Serbian people of his time, Mokranjac greatly contributed to the didactic character of the sacred music in the Serbian Orthodox Church. As a very talented teacher and himself a skillful chanter, Mokranjac recorded a selection of simplified and abbreviated melodic formulas in the Serbian chant.²⁵

²⁴ Ристовић, „Епископ Сава Вуковић и српско црквено појање“, 220.

²⁵ As P. Bingulac argued, it was necessary that one be a skillful chanter in order to complete the work that Stevan St. Mokranjac carried out in the Serbian sacred chant. Yet, surprisingly, Bingulac believes that Mokranjac' chanting skills were limited. Bingulac believes this based on a self-characterization Mokranjac used in the Preface to his *Osmoglasnik*: “...Мокрањаца бисмо сви одмах одлучно додали овим стручњацима – појцима да он сам, у предговору *Осмогласника*, отворено и искрено, као што је увек радио, није ставио овом стацу озбиљне оградe.” See: Петар Бингулац, „Стеван Мокрањац и црквена музика (I део, мелографски рад)“, in *Зборник радова о Стевану Мокрањацу: Примљено на V скупу Одељења ликовне и музичке уметности*, 23. IX 1969. год., ed. Михаило Вукдраговић (Београд: Српска академија наука и уметности, 1971), 19.

Indeed, Mokranjac says that in his melography of the Serbian chant he relied on the knowledge and experience of a number of renowned chanters, since he had forgotten a lot. Yet, this ought not be understood as incompetence, but rather as customary humility. In the Preface Mokranjac testifies that in his childhood he received a formidable education in the Serbian chant. He learned the chant to the extent that he was considered to be the foremost chanter among his peers, being able to sing “the entire eirmologion.” The knowledge which he acquired as a child had been somewhat neglected by the passage of time but not lost, since, as he himself testifies, he was able to recall all the melodies and record the chanters' singing in the real time. See: Стеван Ст. Мокрањац, „Предговор“, in *Осмогласник* (Београд: Штампано у државној штампарији Краљевине Србије, 1908), 1.

Thus he made the chant manageable to be taught in a systematic way in seminaries and schools.²⁶ At the same time Mokranjac's reduction served the purpose of making the sacred music approachable to wider masses, even those with a moderate music talent. The loss of intricate melismata, and its effect on liturgical rhythm, did not necessarily have a negative impact on the esthetic aspect of the Serbian sacred music, since Mokranjac more than compensated for this loss in his elaborate choral compositions.

Mokranjac deserves to be revered and celebrated for the magnitude of service that his pioneering work provided to Serbs in the times of revival of Serbian cultural identity after its systematic destruction, which lasted for several centuries after the loss of statehood. An astute theologian or musicologist cannot fail to recognize the good fortune of Serbs whose autochthonous music has been organically incorporated into the their worship, which was not the case with our less-fortunate eastern neighbors Bulgarians and to an extent Romanians, who, for the most part, use Greek chants in their worship. Therefore, as the late Patriarch Pavle of Serbia exhorted, Mokranjac's noble work ought to be continued and even improved upon by new generations of Serbian musicians and theologians alike as a service to God and Serbian people.²⁷

In conclusion, it becomes clear that the opus of Stevan St. Mokranjac of sacred music of the Serbian Orthodox Church is marked by a fortunate balance between didactic power and restrained esthetic sensibility. Moreover, it is deeply steeped in Orthodox ethos and hymnodic tradition. As such, it is a noteworthy illustration of the successful process of contextualizing theology, as a means of augmented missionary efficiency.

²⁶ A few years before the publication of Mokranjac's work on systematization of the Serbian church chant, Jovan Zivković, professor of the Seminary in Sremski Karlovci (one of the centers of learning in church music at the time), called for a thorough revision of the Serbian chant and its purging from unnecessary and unbecoming melodic decorations. Cf. Јован Живковић, *Ношњи зборник црквених пјесама које се поју на вечерњу, јутрењу, литургији и другим бојослужењима Православне српске цркве као велико појање у један глас са додациком све три литургије у четири гласа за мушки збор* (Нови Сад: Парна штампарија Ђорђа Ивковића, 1908), 89; Ђоковић, „Српски Патријарх Павле о неким питањима нашег црквеног појања: црквено појање и духовно узрастање“, 89.

²⁷ Cf. Ђоковић, „Српски Патријарх Павле о неким питањима нашег црквеног појања: црквено појање и духовно узрастање“, 80.

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СВЕШТЕНА МУЗИКА
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ДЕЛО СТЕВАНА СТ. МОКРАЊЦА
КАО КОНТЕКСТУАЛИЗОВАНО
БОГОСЛОВЉЕ

– ПОВОДОМ СТОГОДИШЊИЦЕ ОД УПОКОЈЕЊА
СТЕВАНА СТ. МОКРАЊЦА –

Василије Вранић

Богословски факултет Свете Саве
Либертивил, САД

Апстракт: Химнографија и црквена музика заузиле су веома важно место у богослужењу хришћанске Цркве од самога почетка. Црквено појање је имало задатак да унапреди богослужење својим естетским пошеницијалом. Друти, и једнако важан, задатак појања је био дидактичке природе. Наиме, богослужбене песме су својим богословским садржајем служиле као снажни инструменти подучавања верних у доктринарном учењу Цркве.

Ова два задатка црквеног појања огледају се у раду Стевана Ст. Мокрањца на очувању, али и обојављању црквене музике Српске Православне Цркве његовим хорским аранжманима. Циљ овога краћког осврта на Мокрањчев рад на пољу црквене музике је да покаже да његов рад, који је прожет деликатном уравнотеженошћу дадактичке снаге и истинчаном естетској осећаја, јесте најбољи пример успешног процеса инкултурације и контекстуализације теологије, као начина повећања мисионарске ефикасности.

Кључне речи: Српска Православна Црква, црквена музика, богослужење, химнографија, српско црквено појање, Стеван Ст. Мокрањца.