PSALM 2

✠ This psalm is identified as being written in the form of a Royal Psalm. Such a psalm reflects the understanding that God acts through the person of the king (understood to be a right-believing king of Israel). They sometimes refer to the coronation or the good works of the king. Sometimes they refer to the relationship between God and the earthly king. Sometimes they prepare for the Incarnation of the Word of God, the Son of God.

✣ See Psalms 12, 17, 19, 20, 22, 23, 44, 71, 100, 109, 131, 143. The numbers of the psalms belonging to this sort of psalm, or to any sort of psalm, vary in accordance with the perception of the various commentators. Many psalms (as this one) may fit more than one classification.

✠ This psalm is also identified as a Messianic Psalm. Such a psalm gives prophetic reference to the promised Messiah, or Christ, a human leader, physically descended from the paternal Davidic line through King David and King Solomon, who is to save God's people.

✣ Archimandrite Lazarus (Moore) refers us to the five messianic psalms : Psalm 2 ; 21 ; 44 ; 71 ; 109.

✠ Saint Gregory of Nyssa says that Psalm 2 foreshadows (prepares for) the Gospel. He encourages us, understanding this, to desist from impiety and accept the Lord as King and to enter into the Kingdom.

✠ This psalm is used (verse 8) as the Prokeimenon of the Prophecy at the First Royal Hour on the Eve of the Nativity of Christ. It is used (verses 1, 2) as verses on the Stikhs of the First Royal Hour of Great and Holy Friday. It is used (verses 1, 2) as the Prokeimenon of the Vesperal Divine Liturgy of Great and Holy Thursday.

✠ Saint Athanasius tells us that we can read this psalm if we wish to rebuke the conspiracies against our Saviour.

"*The advent of Christ, opposition of the leaders of the peoples, and calling of the pagans*"

"*The Messianic drama : warnings to rulers and nations*"

[*Without inscription in Hebrew and Greek.*]

V 1 "Psalm of David" is included as an inscription in some translations. In Acts 4:25, the authorship is attributed to the Prophet David.

✠ As is written in his commentary on the inscriptions about Psalm 1:1, Saint Gregory of Nyssa exhorts us to notice that Psalm 1 serves as an inscription for Psalm 2.

[Ἱνατί ἐφρύαξαν Quare fremuerunt gentes ?]

1 Why have the nations pranced,/ and the peoples ruminated
on emptiness ?

✠ About "*nations*" : in Greek, the word for "*nations*" is ἔθνη, *ethnē*. The word "*ethnos*" is also translated as "people", "race", "tribe". This word is used frequently to refer to the Hebrew/Jewish people who have been set apart and chosen (see 1 Moses 12:2 ; Acts 24:10, 17 ; and other texts). It is also used sometimes by Archimandrite Placide (Deseille) (†2018) to refer to the Christian people in the New Testament. However, the word "*nations*" in this case (and in very many other cases) refers to the Gentiles, and most particularly to pagans.

✣ See the note following about "*peoples*". "*Nation*" and "*peoples*" have complementary meanings, and they often appear in the plural near each other in the psalms, sometimes in apposition.

✣ See verse 8 ; see the note on Psalm 9:6 ; see 2 Moses 15:14 (Matins Canticle 1) ; 5 Moses 32:8, 9, 21, 28, 43 (Matins Canticle 2) ; Psalms 9:12, 16, 18, 20, 21, 37 ; 17:44, 50 ; 21:28, 29 ; 32:10, 12 ; 42:1 ; 43:3, 12, 15 ; 45:7, 11 ; 46:2, 4, 9 ; 48:2 ; 56:10 ; 58:6, 9 ; 64:8 ; 65:7, 8 ; 66:3, 5 ; 67:31 ; 71:11, 17 ; 77:55 ; 78:1, 6, 10 ; 79:9 ; 81:8 ; 82:5 ; 85:9 ; 88:51 ; 93:10 ; 95:3, 5, 7, 10 ; 97:2 ; 101:16 ; 104:1, 13, 44 ; 105:5, 27, 34, 35, 47 ; 107:4 ; 109:6 ; 110:6 ; 112:4 ; 113:10, 12 ; 116:1 ; 117:10 ; 125:2 ; 134:10, 15 ; 147:9 ; 149:7 ; Habakkuk 3:12 (Matins Canticle 4) ; Daniel 3:37 (Matins Canticle 7) ; Apocalypse 11:18.

✠ About "*pranced*" : the verb φρυάσσω, *phryassō*, suggests not only a horse that kicks its fore-feet and springs on its hind feet, but also one that is snorting and neighing violently. Metaphorically, of human beings, this means "be arrogant", "be haughty", "be insolent", "be unruly".

✣ "Bellow" is the word used by Saint Athanasius in order to express the prancing. He considers that bellowing is the irrational mind. He asks how the meditation of those who have not received the Saviour of the human race could not but become empty. He perceives that the bellowing signifies arrogance ; it means the stirring and the uproar of the boasting and puffed-up mind. He says that it refers to the irrational assault of horses [as in battle]. In addition to this, he shows us that in this verse and the following verse, the Prophet David foretells the plots that were concocted against the Incarnate Word of God in preparation for the Passion of Christ.

✠ About "*peoples*" : see the previous note about "*nations*". The Greek word λαοὶ, *laoi*, is translated "*peoples*". However, *laos* may also mean "Man" (the race) ; "the inhabitants of a nation" ; "the subjects of a prince". In the singular, "*people*" may refer to a particular people, or to the chosen people of Israel. There are many examples of the use of this word in a context which demonstrates the Lord's paternal affection for His children.

✣ See 5 Moses 32:43 (Matins Canticle 2) ; Psalms 3:7, 9 ; 7:8, 9 ; 9:9 ; 13:4, 7 ; 17:28, 44, 48 ; 21:7, 32 ; 27:8, 9 ; 28:11 ; 32:10, 12 ; 34:18 ; 43:3, 13, 15 ; 44:6, 11, 13, 18 ; 46:10 ; 47:10 ; 49:4, 7 ; 52:5, 7 ; 55:1, 8 ; 56:10 ; 59:5 ; 61:9 ; 64:1 ; 66:4, 5, 6 ; 67:8, 31, 36 ; 71:2, 3, 4 ; 72:10 ; 73:14, 18 ; 76:15, 16, 21 ; 77:1, 20, 52, 62 ; 78:13 ; 80:9, 12, 14 ; 82:4 ; 84:3, 7, 9 ; 86:4, 6 ; 88:16, 20 ; 93:5, 8, 14 ; 94:7 ; 95:3, 10, 13 ; 96:6 ; 97:9 ; 98:1 ; 99:3 ; 101:23 ; 104:13, 20, 24, 25, 43, 44 ; 105:4, 40, 48 ; 106:32 ; 107:4 ; 110:6, 9 ; 112:8 ; 113:1 ; 115:5, 9 ; 116:1 ; 124:2 ; 134:12, 14 ; 135:16 ; 143:2, 15 ; 148:11, 14 ; 149:4, 7 ; Habakkuk 3:10, 13, 16 (Matins Canticle 4).

✠ About "*ruminated*" : see the note about "*ruminate*" on Psalm 1:2.

✠ About "*emptiness*" : this translates the Greek word κενά, *kena*. In Liddell and Scott's *Greek-English*

Lexicon ("L&S"), the primary meaning is "empty". It may also mean "foolish", "worthless", "vain". Because it is a plural adjective, it may be used as a noun to express "empty things", "vain things", "foolish things", "worthless things", hence "emptiness".

✣ See the note about "*empty*" on Psalm 7:5.

✠ See Acts 4:25.

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2 The kings of the earth stood by,/ and the rulers gathered together as one/ against the LORD, and against His christ :

V 2 About this verse : Saint Augustine's understanding is that this alludes to our Lord's persecutors who are mentioned in Acts 4:26-27.

✣ Bishop Theodoret of Cyrrhus expands on this as he says that the words come from one who rejects and abhors folly. Despite the conspiracies to murder the Christ, their plots came to nothing. They could not do away with Him, because He rose on the Third Day, and conquered sin and death.

✣ Bishop Eusebius of Cæsarea considers the conspiratorial alliance from a more cosmic dimension. He teaches that the leaders of the whole world at various times have all been drawn together in order to make a concerted treacherous rebellion against the King of the Universe.

✣ Father P Reardon considers that these words are a reaction against the righteous man. This may be seen by Christians as the reaction of worldly authorities against Christ.

✣ By extension, this could be taken as a reaction by the negative spiritual powers against Christ.

✠ About "*kings of the earth*" : see Psalms 47:5 ; 71:11 ; 75:13 ; 88:28 ; 137:4 ; 148:11.

✠ About "*kings*" : see verse 10 ; see 1 Kingdoms 2:10 (Matins Canticle 3) ; Psalms 17:41 ; 19:10 ; 20:2, 8 ; 32:16 ; 44:2, 6, 10, 12, 14, 15 ; 47:5 ; 59:9 ; 60:7 ; 62:12 ; 67:15, 30 ; 71:1, 10, 11 ; 101:16, 23 ; 104:14, 20, 30 ; 107:9 ; 109:5 ; 118:46 ; 134:10 ; 135:17, 18, 19, 20 ; 137:4 ; 143:10 ; 149:8 ; Daniel 3:32, 46 (Matins Canticle 7).

✠ About "*earth*" : see 2 Moses 15:12 (Matins Canticle 1) ; 5 Moses 32:1, 24 (Matins Canticle 2) ; 1 Kings 2:8, 10 (Matins Canticle 3) ; Psalms 9:37 ; 15:13 ; 17:8 ; 18:5 ; 23:1 ; 32:8 ; 56:6 ; 73:12 ; 76:19 ; 88:12 ; 89:2 ; 95:13 ; 96:4 ; 97:9 ; 101:16, 20, 26 ; 102:11 ; 103:5, 9, 13, 24, 30, 32, 35 ; 104:7, 16 ; 105:17, 38 ; 107:6 ; 108:15 ; 109:6 ; 111:2 ; 112:6 ; 113:7, 11, 23, 24 ; 118:19, 64, 87, 90, 119 ; 120:2 ; 123:8 ; 133:3 ; 134:6, 7 ; 135:6 ; 137:4 ; 138:15 ; 139:12 ; 145:6 ; 146:8 ; 147:4 ; 148:7, 11, 13 ; Habakkuk 3:3, 6, 12 (Matins Canticle 4) ; Isaiah 26:9, 10, 15, 18 (Matins Canticle 5) ; Daniel 3:32, 37 (Matins Canticle 7) ; Daniel 3:74 (Matins Canticle 8).

✠ About "*the rulers ... one" :* see Psalms 30:14 ; 82:4, 6 ; 93:21 ; 118:23 ; Matthew 12:14; 26:3-5 ; 27:1 ; Mark 15:1 ; Luke 20:14; 22:2-6 ; John 11:47-53 ; Acts 5:39 ; Apocalypse 19:19.

✠ About "*gathered together*" : this phrase translates the Greek verb συνάγω, *synagō*, which means "bring together", "gather together", "convene", "assemble a council", "join". This verb was used by Xenophon with regard to contracting a marriage.

✣ See Psalms 15:4 ; 30:14 ; 32:7.

✣ With regard to the synagogue assembly, see the note about "*church*" on Psalm 21:23.

✠ About "*Lord*" : see the note about "*Lord*" on Psalm 1:2.

✠ About "*christ*" : Saint Cyril of Alexandria explains that there are many christs, who are so called because they were anointed ; but He who is the Christ of God the Father is One, and One only.

✣ Metropolitan Bartholomew (Anania) reminds us that "christ" indicates a king by anointing. Some translators write "against His messiah", and others prefer "against His anointed". He further observes that Psalm 2 is a prophetic psalm par excellence, with messianic and eschatological references. In this regard, it stands next to Psalm 109. He says that the "*christ*" of this psalm could be easily identified with Jesus Christ, the "Son of David", and that He transcends by far the historical events of King David.

✣ Father Patrick Reardon demonstrates that Adam the Man in Psalm 1 is now manifested as David the King, God's anointed one, who foreshadows the Messiah (the Christ).

✣ This word comes to English from the Greek word χριστός, *khristos*, "*christ*", translates the Hebrew משיח, *mashiah*, which means "anointed one", "messiah". Usually used with the definite article in Greek, "the christ" is used by many translations of the LXX in the Slavonic, Latin, Romanian, earlier English, and other versions. It is a title in Greek, appearing also in English, and it is used here to participate in its usage in the "New Testament" as referring to Jesus the Anointed One, Jesus the Messiah. This is related with the usage of the Fathers in their writings. "The anointed", or "the christ", is a title, not a surname. It is attributed to those, especially the Prophet David, who were harbingers of our Saviour, who is the ultimate Christ. Other christologically-related words, such as "beloved" are similarly not capitalised because although there is such a reference to Jesus the Christ, this is still a harbinger of Him.

✣ See 1 Kingdoms 2:10 ; see the note on Psalm 17:51 ; see also Psalms 19:7 ; 27:8 ; 83:10 ; 88:21 ; 104:15 ; 131:10, 17.

✣ In the Old Testament, many passages demonstrate that high-priests and kings received their authority through anointing.

✣ See 3 Moses 8:12 ; 4 Moses 3:3 ; 1 Kingdoms 10:1 ; 16:1, 12-13 ; 3 Kingdoms 1:39 ; 1 Chronicles 11:3 ; Psalm 88:21.

Pause

✠ About "*Pause*" : "Pause" is an English translation of the Greek διάψαλμα, *diapsalma*, which is a translation of the Hebrew סלה, *selah* : a liturgical direction, the meaning of which is now unclear. Some believe that it indicates a musical interlude. See p. in the introduction to this work regarding *diapsalma*.

✣ "*Pause*" is not spoken aloud when reading the psalms.

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3 "Let us break their bonds asunder,/ and let us cast away their yoke from us".

V 3 About this verse : Saint Augustine understands that the words of this verse and of the first verse

express the desire of those who devise empty schemes to ensure that they will not be limited nor bound by the way which the Lord indicates.

- ✣ Those in rebellion against Christ, against the Light (see John 1:5), seek false freedom. This encounter with the realm of falsehood requires spiritual struggle. "Struggle" does not mean fighting as in wrestling or in warfare. This sort of struggle is more like an aspect of oriental martial arts, in that one steps aside, turns the back, deflects the blows. We call to the Lord, and we depend upon Him to defend us. We do not engage the attacker directly, but instead we call to the Lord, our Defender. Those who rebel against the Lord believe that they seek freedom, but they find instead emptiness, meaninglessness, isolation, and slavery to fear.
- ✣ See Matthew 21:38 ; Mark 12:7 ; Luke 20:14.

✠ About "*cast away*" : see Psalms 50:13 ; 70:9 ; Jonah 2:4 ; Jeremiah 7:14.

✠ About "*yoke*" : Saint Gregory of Nyssa points out that the "*yoke*" refers to God's commandment.

- ✣ A "*yoke*" is fundamentally either a wooden crosspiece that is fastened over the necks of two animals and attached to the plough or cart that they are to pull, or a shaped piece of wood which is placed behind the neck and over the shoulders of person, which is used to help to balance the carrying of two burdens (or containers of liquids) on either side. It is sometimes used as a metaphor for an imposed burden, such as slavery, such as the burden of communism, dictatorships, and imposed Islam. Those who rebel against the Lord's commandments misinterpret His life-giving prescriptions as being an onerous burden, and they prefer their own way as supposedly being better.
- ✣ See Jeremiah 2:20 ; 5:5 ; Matthew 11:29.

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4 He who is dwelling in the Heavens will laugh at them ;/ the LORD will sneer at them.

V 4 About "*the Heavens*" : according to Saint John of Damascus, Heaven encompasses all created things, both the visible, and the invisible. In other words, since God is everywhere, and Heaven is where God is, Heaven likewise embraces all things.

- ✣ According to the usual dictionaries, "*the Heavens*" refers to "the expanse wherein are seen the sun, the moon, and the stars", or to "the abode of God, the angels, and the good". However, to the Orthodox Christian mentality, there is much, much more to be understood.
- ✣ See 5 Moses 32:1, 40, 43 (Matins Canticle 2) ; 1 Kingdoms 2:10 (Matins Canticle 3) ; Psalms 8:2, 4 ; 10:4 ; 13:2 ; 17:10, 14 ; 18:2, 7 ; 19:7 ; 32:6, 13 ; 35:6 ; 49:4, 6 ; 52:3 ; 56:4, 6, 11, 12 ; 67:9, 15, 34 ; 68:35 ; 72:9, 25 ; 75:9 ; 77:23, 24, 26 ; 79:15 ; 84:12 ; 88:3, 6, 12, 30, 38 ; 90:1 ; 95:5, 11 ; 96:6 ; 101:20, 26 ; 102: 11, 19 ; 103:2 ; 104:40 ; 106:26 ; 107:5, 6 ; 112:4, 6 ; 113:11, 23, 24 ; 118:89 ; 120:2 ; 122:1 ; 123:8 ; 133:3 ; 134:6 ; 135:5, 26 ; 138:8 ; 143:5 ; 145:6 ; 146:8 ; 148:1, 4, 13 ; Habakkuk 3:3 (Matins Canticle 4) ; Daniel 3:36, 56 (Matins Canticle 7) ; Daniel 3:59, 60 63 (Matins Canticle 8).
- ✣ About the appearance together of "*Heavens*" and "*earth*" : see the note about "*the Heavens ... earth*" on Psalm 88:12.

✠ About "*laugh*" : according to Saint Augustine, this laughing is not to be understood in a bodily sense, as though God laughed with facial expressions. It must be referred to the gift that He gives to His saints. They foresee what is to come, that the Name of Christ and His Kingship will spread to future generations and be acknowledged amongst the nations. Thus, the saints are enabled to understand that those others have concocted futile schemes. This gift through which such things are foreseen is God's laughter and derision.

✣ See Psalms 36:13 ; 58:9 ; Proverbs 1:27 ; Wisdom of Solomon 4:18. See the notes about "*anger*" and "*fury*" on verse 5. See the note about "*laugh*" (human) on Psalm 24:2.

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5 Then He will speak to them in His anger,/ and in His fury will
He stir them up.

V 5 About "*in*" : throughout this translation, "*in*" is mostly used to translate the Greek ἐν, *en*. "*In*" appears frequently with meanings beyond simple spatial placement. It can imply also agency, causality and other things.

✠ About "*anger*" and "*fury*" (Divine) : Saint Augustine explains that "*anger*" and "*fury*" ought not to be understood as an expression of any passion on the part of the Lord. Rather, he says, they are expressions of the manner through which He rightly corrects us. Cassiodorus supports this interpretation.

✣ Theology is an attempt to express in words what is our experience and understanding of God. It is therefore necessary that we understand these words in a manner that is appropriate to God. The Fathers point out that God is free from passions. Words such as "fury", "*anger*", "loathing", "hatred", "jealousy" are not to be taken literally. These words describe how a person, mired in sin, may perceive what is truly the action of God's love, pressing and persuading the person towards repentance. In our own anger, we cease to live in harmony with God, and we deprive ourselves of His protection. This results in our wrongly blaming Him for what, to our distorted vision, seem to be demonstrations of passions on His part. However, God uses these consequences to help us to wake up and to turn about to Him. See *The Orthodox Study Bible* note on 2 Moses 4:14.

✣ About "*anger*" and "*fury*" together : see verse 12 ; see the note about "*fury*" and "*anger*" on Psalm 6:2 ; see 2 Moses 15:7, 8 (Matins Canticle 1) ; 4 Moses 12:9 ; Psalms 29:6 ; 36:8 ; 37:2 ; 68:25 ; 77:38, 49 ; 84:4 ; 89:7, 11 ; 101:11.

✠ About "*anger*" (Divine, noun) : see verse 12 ; see 2 Moses 15:7 (Matins Canticle 1) ; 4 Moses 12:9 ; Psalms 6:2 ; 7:7, 12 ; 9:34 ; 17:8, 9, 16 ; 20:10 ; 26:9 ; 29:6 ; 36:8 ; 37:2, 4 ; 54:22 ; 55:8 ; 57:10 ; 58:14 ; 59:3 ; 68:25 ; 75:8 ; 76:10 ; 77:21, 31, 38, 40, 49, 50 ; 78:6 ; 79:5 ; 84:4, 6 ; 87:17 ; 88:47 ; 89: 7, 9, 11 ; 94:11 ; 101:11 ; 105:40 ; 109:5 ; Isaiah 26:20 (Matins Canticle 5) ; Mark 3:5. About human anger, see the note about "*be angry*" on Psalm 4:5.

✠ About "*fury*" (Divine) : see verses 12 ; see 2 Moses 15:8 (Matins Canticle 1) ; Psalms 9:35 ; 29:6 ; 36:8 ; 37:2 ; 68:25 ; 73:1 ; 77:38, 49 ; 84:4, 5 ; 87:8 ; 89:7, 11 ; 101:11 ; 105:23. About human fury, see the note about "*fury*" on Psalm 6:8.

✠ About "*stir ... up*" : other related meanings of this verb ταράσσω, *tarassō* are "shake", "disturb", "trouble", "throw into confusion".

✣ See the note on Psalm 6:3. See also Psalms 6:4, 11 ; 17:8 ; 29:8 ; 30:11 ; 37:11 ; 38:12 ; 41:7 ; 45:3, 4, 7

; 47:6 ; 54:3, 5 ; 56:5 ; 63:9 ; 64:8 ; 67:6 ; 75:6 ; 76:5, 17 ; 82:18 ; 89:7 ; 103:29 ; 106:27 ; 118:60 ; 142:4 ; Habakkuk 3:2, 15, 16 (Matins Canticle 4).

✠ The reversal of the word order of the two phrases of this verse produces a chiastic poetic intensification.

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6 "But I have been appointed by Him/ to be King over Sion, His holy mountain,/ proclaiming the ordinance of the LORD.

V 6 About "*appointed*" : see Psalms 8:7 ; 9:21 ; 17:44 ; 44:17 ; 104:21 ; 108:6.

✠ About "*King ... mountain*" : "O Sion, holy mountain of God, and Jerusalem, lift up your eyes round about and behold your children, gathered in you ; for lo, they have come from afar to worship your King. Peace be upon Israel and salvation to the Gentiles" (Stikh of Ode 5 of the Canon of Matins of Palm Sunday).

✠ About "*king*" and kingship : Saint Gregory of Nyssa, with a different emphasis, puts this text in relation to the Prophecy of Isaiah 9:6. On the basis of the words of the prophet, he supposes that King David describes the Lord's establishment of His Kingdom as a king. However, He does this on the basis of His own submission as a child to being lowered to the status of a servant, from which He was taken up and absorbed into the majesty of the Kingdom.

- Theodoret, Bishop of Cyrrhus, comments that as God, He possesses His Kingship by nature, and as human, He receives it by election.

✠ About "*King*" (as God) : see the notes about "*king*" on Psalms 5:3 ; 67:25 ; see also Tobit 13:16 ; Psalms 23:7, 8, 9, 10 ; 28:10 ; 43:5 ; 46:3, 7, 8 ; 47:3 ; 67:13 ; 73:12 ; 83:4 ; 88:19 ; 94:3 ; 97:6 ; 98:4 ; 144:1 ; 149:2 ; Malachi 1:14 ; Matthew 2:2 ; 27:37 ; John 12:15 ; 18:37, 39 ; Apocalypse 19:16.

- About "kingship" : see the note about "*Kingship*" on Psalm 9:37.
- About "kingdom" : see the note about "*kingdom*" on Psalm 21:29.

✠ About "*Sion*" : Saint Augustine writes that if "*Sion*" connotes contemplation, then we can apply it most aptly to the Church, whose members are urged to rise daily to the contemplation of God's glory. He goes on to say that Christ has been established as King over the Holy Church, which he calls a mountain. See the apostolic words : "*But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord*" (2 Corinthians 3:18). [See the note on Psalm 64:2 ; see also Psalm 62:1-9.]

- Although for Saint Augustine and standard dictionaries the word "contemplate" seems to be considered to be a mental exercise, for the serious monk it is rather an exercise of the heart in wordless communion with the Lord.
- The word "*Sion*" usually refers to a specific mountain near/in Jerusalem (Mount Sion), on which stood a Jebusite fortress of the same name that was conquered by David and was named the City of David. The extended meanings and references include the Temple, the City of Jerusalem and even all the Holy Land. Because there is in that place more than one hill, there are some phrases in other psalms that suggest this by using "mountains" (*e. g.* see Psalm 124:2).

✠ About "*Sion ... holy mountain*" : "*holy mountain*" is a metaphor primarily for Mount Sion. However, an extension may also be made to Mount Horeb (Sinai), since it is called the "Mountain of the Lord".

✣ See 2 Moses 15:17 (Matins Canticle 1) ; Psalms 3:5 ; 13:7 ; 14:1 ; 23:3 ; 42:3 ; 47:2, 3, 12, 13 ; 50:20 ; 68:36 ; 86:1 ; 98:9 ; 124:1, 2 ; 132:3 ; Micah 4:2 ; Obadiah 1:17 ; Isaiah 2:2, 3 ; 27:13 ; 56:7 ; 57:13. See the note about "*dwelling in Sion*" on Psalm 9:12.

✠ About "*ordinance*" : see Psalms 7:7 ; 80:5 ; 93:20 ; 98:7 ; 104:10 ; 148:6 ; Isaiah 26:9 (Matins Canticle 5).

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7 The LORD said to Me :/ 'You are My Son, today have I begotten You.

V 7 About "*today*" : Saint Augustine comments that these words refer to the birth of the Son of the Father in eternity (before all ages). He says that "*today*" refers to the present. However, this actually refers to an "eternal today" in eternity. "Today" in eternity has no past and no future, since all that is eternal is eternally coming into being. What is eternal always is. In this phrase, the Orthodox Faith proclaims the eternal generation of the Power and Wisdom of God (1 Corinthians 1:24), who is the Only-begotten Son of God. "... Begotten from the eternal Father, begotten from eternity, begotten in eternity, with no beginning, with no ending, with no space of extension, because He is what is, because He Himself Is Who Is".

✣ Cassiodorus explains that "*today have I begotten You*" refers to the fact that the Son of God is "the Only-begotten, begotten of the Father before all ages" (see the Nicene Creed). Therefore, he recalls for us that the Prophet Isaiah wrote : '*Who will declare His generation ?*' (Isaiah 53:8). He continues the reference to the Symbol of Faith, as he says that the Son of God is "Light from Light, True God from True God", from whom and through whom and in whom are all things (see Romans 11:36).

✣ Metropolitan Bartholomew (Anania) adds that "*today*" means that "today" is continuous, not a single and isolated day.

✣ According to Saint Silouan and to Archimandrite Zacharias (Zachariou), this verse applies by extension to those who are in Christ, by spiritual begetting. This follows the teaching of Saint Leo the Great, that through the New Covenant we Christians become participants with Him who was told by the Father : "*You are My Son...nations as Your inheritance*". He exhorts us to glory in the mercy of the One who adopted us.

✣ See 2 Kingdoms 7:14 ; Psalms 88:27-28 ; 109:3 ; Matthew 3:17 ; 17:5 ; Mark 1:11 ; 9:7 ; Luke 3:22 ; 9:35 ; Acts 13:33 ; Hebrews 1:5 ; 5:5 ; 2 Peter 1:17.

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8 Ask of Me, and I will give You/ the nations as Your inheritance,/
and as Your possession the ends of the earth.

V 8 Saint Augustine interprets this verse in a temporal sense, regarding the Manhood which our Lord took upon Himself. He says that He, who offered Himself as the Sacrifice above and beyond all sacrifices, still intercedes for us (see Romans 8:34). The words that follow "*ask of Me*" may imply that the whole of all life on earth is to be united in love to the Name of Christ, saved from sin and death, become His possession, and bear Him spiritual fruit.

✣ See Psalms 21:28 ; 71:8-11 ; 81:8 ; 105:5 ; Zechariah 9:10 ; Hebrews 1:2.

✠ About "*will*" : from the perspective of God Himself, the exercise of the will truly produces certainty in future fulfilment. Human beings often do say "I will", but we fallen ones cannot assure certainty (Romans 7:14-8:2) in the same manner as does God. See the note on "*shall*" in Psalm 1:2.

✠ About "*nations*" : see verse 2.

✠ About "*inheritance*" : see the notes about "*receives the heritage*" on Psalm 5:1, and about "*inheritance*" on Psalm 15:5 ; see 2 Moses 15:17 (Matins Canticle 1) ; 4 Moses 18:20 ; 5 Moses 10:9 ; 18:2 ; Psalms 27:9 ; 32:12 ; 38:18 ; 46:5 ; 60:6 ; 67:10 ; 73:2 ; 77:55, 62, 71 ; 78:1 ; 93:5, 14 ; 104:11 ; 105:5, 40 ; 110:6 ; 126:3 ; 138:12 ; 135:21, 22 ; Wisdom of Sirach 45:22 ; Isaiah 58:14 ; Ephesians 1:18 ; 1 Peter 1:4. See also the note about "*portion*" on Psalm 10:6.

✠ Note that in these phrases, "*the nations as Your inheritance,/ and as Your possession the ends of the earth*", there is a poetic "chiasmus" of "*nations*" - "*inheritance*" and "*possession*" - "*ends of the earth*". The word order reversal of the second two phrases gives a chiastic poetic intensification through mirroring and repetition.

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9 You will shepherd them with an iron rod ;/ as a potter's vessel
will You shatter them'".

V 9 About "*shepherd*" : this verb means to guide someone or a group of people somewhere, making sure that they go where they are expected to go. This sort of shepherding implies that the shepherd guides by leading, going before, and showing the way (in the manner of a Middle Eastern shepherd). In the Psalter, we see only verb forms of shepherding, and no nouns.

- ✣ See Psalms 22:1 ; 27:9 ; 36:3 ; 47:15 ; 77:71, 72 ; 79:2 ; 151:1 ; Ezekiel 34:23 ; Apocalypse 7:17.
- ✣ About "*shepherd*" as a noun elsewhere in the Scriptures, see Isaiah 40:11 ; Jeremiah 23:4 ; Ezekiel 34:12, 23 ; Matthew 9:36 ; John 10:1-5, 11-16.

✠ About "*iron rod*" : Saint Cyprian of Carthage reflects that although impure and damaged vessels and weeds (persons) are found in the Church, it cannot be a reason to go away from the Church. Our responsibility is, rather, with God's help to be the best possible vessel or plant of Christ. Any breaking of any vessel belongs only to the Lord, to whom alone is given an "*iron rod*". Let no-one dare in pride to usurp the Lord's responsibility and prerogative by attempting to do any cleaning-up, weeding, correction or shattering on the basis of one's own judgements (see Matthew 13:28-30, 47-49).

- ✣ Bishop Theodoret of Cyrrhus comments that the rod of iron is to be understood to be the Roman rule, that is, the fourth kingdom of the Prophecy of Daniel (see Daniel 2:40).
- ✣ Archimandrite Lazarus (Moore) says that the rod of iron refers to the laws of nature.
- ✣ When taken Christologically, the iron rod is understood to mean that the Lord sends His Only-begotten Son to put things into proper order, and to judge all.
- ✣ See Apocalypse 2:27 ; 12:5 ; 19:15.

✠ About "*potter's vessel*" : the Greek text reads "σκύη", *skuē*, which is in the plural. However, all the translators treat it as a singular. Nevertheless, in Apocalypse 2:27 (which quotes this psalm-verse), the same word is translated as a plural.

✣ See Psalm 30:13 ; Isaiah 30:14 ; Apocalypse 2:27.

✠ About "*shatter*" : this word means the sudden breaking of something into many small pieces.

✣ See 2 Moses 15:3, 7 (Matins Canticle 1) ; Psalms 3:8 ; 9:36 ; 33:19, 21 ; 36:15, 17 ; 45:10 ; 47:8 ; 50:19 ; 57:7 ; 73:13 ; 75:4 ; 104:16, 33 ; 106:16 ; 123:7 ; 146:3 ; Daniel 3:39, 44 (Matins Canticle 7) ; Jeremiah 19:11.

✠ The word order reversal of the two phrases of this verse provides a chiastic poetic intensification.

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10 And now, you kings, understand :/ be instructed, all you, judging the earth.

V 10 About "*you kings, understand*" : Saint Augustine makes a paraphrase of Wisdom of Solomon 6:1-11, and he exhorts the rulers of the earth to understand that it is to their advantage to be in harmony with God's Will. Only then will they be able to be good, profitable, wise, protecting and protected rulers. Anticipating the words of the following verse, he adds that kings serve the Lord when they fulfil the specific responsibilities of rulers : they make constructive laws ; they provide order in society ; they administer righteous judgements ; they inhibit the activities of evil. Hezekiah served the Lord when he destroyed the groves and temples of the idols (see 4 Kingdoms 18:1-8). Josiah served the Lord as he did similar deeds (see 4 Kingdoms, chapters 22 and 23). The king of Niniveh served the Lord when he brought about the repentance and conversion of his city (see Jonah 3:7-10).

✠ About "*kings*" : see verse 2.

✠ About "*understand*" : this translates the Greek verb συνίημι, *syniēmi*, the root meaning of which is "bring, set, or come together", from which is derived "*understand*" or "perceive".

✣ See 5 Moses 32:7, 29 (Matins Canticle 2) ; 1 Kingdoms 2:10 (Matins Canticle 3) ; Psalms 5:2 ; 13:2 ; 15:7 ; 18:13 ; 27:5 ; 31:8 ; 32:15 ; 35:4 ; 40:2 ; 48:13 ; 49:22 ; 52:3 ; 63:10 ; 72:17 ; 81:5 ; 91:7 ; 93:7, 8 ; 100:2 ; 105:7 ; 106:43 ; 118:27, 34, 73, 95, 99, 100, 104, 125, 130, 144, 169 ; 138:2. See the note about "*understanding*" (verbal noun) on Psalm 31:1.

✠ About "*be instructed*" : the source-word of pædagogy, παιδεύω, *pædeuō*, "instruct", carries the meaning of "chastise", in that instruction was always perceived to be accompanied by beating with a stick for correcting any faults. In the context of Psalm 6:2, and other uses of "instruct", the word is often translated by others as "chasten"; but chastening, the use of the rod (a small stick), was in those days a prime tool of instruction or discipline, to reinforce some lessons, and thus it usually implies instruction. Indeed, many writers refer to this as godly discipline. The current popular spelling of "pædagogy" as "pedagogy" is misleading, since that spelling leads one to a Latin word "*pes, pedis*" which means "foot" (as correctly used in "pedway", "pedestrian"). The traditional spelling of "pædagogy" shows the Latin spelling of the Greek root-word παῖς, παιδός, "*pais, paidos*", "child".

✣ See verse 12 ; see also 5 Moses 8:5 ; Psalms 6:2 ; 17:36 ; 37:2 ; 89:10 ; 93:12 ; 117:18 ; Proverbs 3:12 ; Hebrew 12:5-11 ; Apocalypse 3:19.

✠ About "*judging*" (verbal noun) : see the notes about "*judge*" on Psalm 9:9, 39 ; see also 5 Moses 32:36 (Matins Canticle 2) ; 1 Kingdoms 2:10 (Matins Canticle 3) ; Psalms 5:11 ; 7:9 ; 9:5, 20 ; 25:1 ; 34:24 ; 36:33 ;

42:1 ; 50:6 ; 53:3 ; 57:2, 12 ; 66:6 ; 71:2, 4 ; 74:3 ; 81:2, 3, 8 ; 93:2 ; 95:10, 13 ; 97:9 ; 108:7 ; 109:6 ; 118:154 ; 134:14. See also the note about "*judgements*" on Psalm 9:17 (noun).

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11 Serve the LORD in fear,/ and exult in Him in trembling.

V 11 About "*fear*" (with regard to "fear of the Lord") : this word translates the Greek word φόβος, *phobos*, which means "fear", "terror", "scruple", "reverence", "panic", "flight".

✣ When we consider the possible meanings of this word, and how it is used in the Psalter, it is important to keep in mind the general Scriptural usage with regard to the fear of God (1 Moses 22:12 ; Proverbs 9:10 ; Isaiah 11:3). In this verse, the fear of the Lord is equivalent to reverence, great respect, or awe. It is the clearly positive usage. The other sort of fear is negative, and not God-given, hence the comment by the Apostle John in 1 John 4:18 (where the antitote is given : love).

✣ See the note about "*fear of the Lord*" on Psalm 18:10 ; see Psalms 5:8 ; 14:4 ; 24:12, 14 ; 30:20 ; 32:18 ; 33:8, 10, 12 ; 59:6 ; 84:10 ; 89:11 ; 110:10 ; 111:1 ; 118:38, 120 ; 127:1 ; Job 28:28 ; Proverbs 1:7 ; 9:10 ; 10:28 ; 14:27 ; 19:23 ; Wisdom of Sirach 1:12, 14, 16, 18, 24 ; 23:27 ; 34:14 ; Isaiah 26:17 (Matins Canticle 5) ; Luke 12:4. See *The Orthodox Study Bible* note on Sirach 15:19.

✣ See also another usage (Fear of Isaac) in 1 Moses 31:42.

✠ About "*fear*" and "*trembling*" : Saint Nikolaj (Velimirović) preaches : "Serve with fear, for the Lord is righteous ; rejoice with trembling, for the Lord is exalted and holy. Rejoice with a pure and holy joy, as the angels rejoice in God the living and ineffable". He adds that our whole life on earth is service of the Lord and joy in Him. If we do not serve Him, then we serve our own destruction, and if we do not rejoice in Him, then we rejoice in our own dark works. We pray that He may enable us to fulfil our service in the fear of Him and purify our joy by trembling before Him.

✣ Metropolitan Bartholomew (Anania) writes that in Hebrew, the words are : "trembling, kiss His feet".

✣ See 2 Moses 15:16 (Matins Canticle 1) ; Psalm 54:6 ; Philippians 2:12.

✠ About "*exult*" : see Psalms 5:12 ; 9:3, 15 ; 12:5, 6 ; 13:7 ; 15:9 ; 18:6 ; 19:6 ; 20:2 ; 30:8 ; 31:11 ; 32:1 ; 34:9, 27 ; 39:17 ; 47:12 ; 50:16 ; 52:7 ; 58:17 ; 59:8 ; 62:8 ; 66:5 ; 67:4, 5 ; 69:5 ; 70:23 ; 74:10 ; 80:2 ; 83:3 ; 88:13, 17 ; 89:14 ; 94:1 ; 95:11, 12 ; 96:1, 8 ; 97:4, 8 ; 117:24 ; 118:162 ; 131:9, 16 ; 144:7 ; 149:2, 5 ; Habakkuk 3:18 (Matins Canticle 4) ; Luke 1:47 (Matins Canticle 9, Part 1).

✠ About "*trembling*" : see 2 Moses 15:15, 16 (Matins Canticle 1) ; Psalms 47:7 ; 54:6 ; Habakkuk 3:16 (Matins Canticle 4). See the note about "*trembling*" (adjective) on Psalm 17:8.

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12 Grasp His instruction/ lest the LORD be angry,/ and you perish from the righteous way,/ whenever His fury be quickly kindled./ Blessed are all those putting their trust in Him.

V 12 About "*grasp His instruction*" : Saint Augustine exhorts us all to hold tight to the Lord's teaching and example, and in doing so to accept also His correction. Thus, we live under His protection.

✠ About "*instruction*" : see the note about "*instruction*" on Psalm 17:36 ; see Psalm 118:66 ; Habakkuk 3:5 (Matins Canticle 4) ; Isaiah 26:16 (Matins Canticle 5).

✠ About "*angry*" and "*fury*" : see verse 5.

✠ About "*perish*" : see the note about "*perish*" on Psalm 1:6.

✠ About "*righteous way*" : Saint Augustine reflects that anyone who has experienced the joy and sweetness that come with living in righteousness would rightly understand that to fall away, or deliberately to divert from this life-giving path would be a catastrophe. The result would be to wander in aimless purposelessness.

✠ About "*righteous*" (adjective) : see 5 Moses 32:4 (Matins Canticle 2) ; 1 Kingdoms 2:2 (Matins Canticle 3) ; Psalms 7:11, 12 ; 10:7 ; 13:5 ; 50:6 ; 57:11 ; 72:13 ; 111:4 ; 114:5 ; 118:137 ; 128:4 ; 142:2 ; 144:17 ; Ezekiel 18:5, 9 ; Daniel 3:27 (Matins Canticle 7). See also the note about "*righteous one*" (singular) on Psalm 5:13 ; see also the note about "*righteous*" (plural) on Psalm 1:5.

✠ About "*way*" : see the notes about "*way*" on Psalm 1:1, 6.

✠ About "*quickly kindled*" : Saint Augustine reminds us that the Lord's righteous response towards disobedience and defiance is without delay : it is instant.

- ✣ See Wisdom of Sirach 5:7.

✠ About "*blessed*" : see the note about "*blessed*" on Psalm 1:1.

✠ About "*trust*" : it seems that one of the most difficult things for human beings is to trust God. Human beings are generally trapped in organising and manipulating and being in control of things and situations. This is due to our having fallen away from God's love. We are therefore full of fear, and we cannot or will not trust God. Because of fear, we seek to protect ourselves by trying to be in charge. This produces distortions in ourselves, and it can reduce ourselves to a mere caricature. However, it is only in trusting Him that we can be anything approximating our true selves. This trust is founded in a loving relationship with the Lord. This love liberates us from fear, and the light of God's love brings us back to our true selves.

- ✣ See Psalms 10:1 ; 24:2 ; 117:8 ; 124:1 ; 145:3 ; Proverbs 3:5 ; 16:18 ; 29:25 ; Isaiah 8:17 ; Jeremiah 17:3 ; Hebrews 2:13.

O Lord, break the chains of our sins ;
that, fastened to the yoke of Your service,
we may be able to serve You with fear and with awe. — Roman
