

<u>Passion Chants</u>	<u>Passion Chants</u>	The Shweiri Monastic Choir	Lady Fairuz			<u>Nativity Chants</u>
Sr Mary Kairouz	The Shweiri Monastic Choir	The Shweiri Monastic Choir	Lady Fairuz			
Hallelujah + Here Cometh the Bridegroom	Hallelujah + Here Cometh the Bridegroom	Have Mercy on Us, O Lord, Have Mercy	Today was Hung upon a Tree		Come, Let us See	Today the Virgin [Preparation]
I Behold Thy Bridal Chamber (Arabic)	I Behold Thy Bridal Chamber	O Lord of Hosts, Be with Us	I am the Sorrowful Mother		He Whom All Containeth Not	Thy Nativity, O Christ
I Behold Thy Bridal Chamber (Greek)	The Leaders of Peoples [Nations]	Today the Grace of the Holy Spirit	O My People and Companions		Christ is Born "The Aramis"	Come, O ye Faithful
O Lord, the Sinful Woman...	The Sinful Woman...	O Divine Christ	Mary Arose		Today the Virgin	Why Dost Thou Marvel, O Mary?
The Lord is God	When the Disciples Were...	The Gospel	Aa, My Beloved		The Hirmos	The Nativity Epistle [Galatians: 4:4-7]
Thee We Magnify (Greek, Arabic)	O Lord, You Had Qualified the Thief	O Righteous One	All Generations		Today is Born from the Virgin	Since my Youth [Psalm Verses]
It is Right	Today was Hung upon a Tree		Hallelujah, the Angel... Evlogitarias of the Ressurrection		The Ninth Ode	The Gospel [Luke: 2:1-14]
All the Generations	O Thou Who Puttest on Light		Christ has Risen			The Ithiomelon

Christ is Risen (Greek, Arabic)	The Noble Joseph and the Angel...		The Angel Cried [Uttered]			
The Angel Cried [Uttered]	O Christ the Life					
Accept me Today	Thee We Glorify All the Generations					
All of Creation	The Great Moses...					
You who in Christ have been Baptised	Rise O God and Rule					

INTRODUCTION

Following are the translations of the prayers that are chanted, corresponding to the order given in the table above. They only pertain to the two rightmost columns of hymns, both under the heading of ‘Nativity Chants’. Most of these come from the Byzantine Matins (Orthros) service on the liturgical day of Christmas, and are being sung by a Melchite choir. No English rendering of the Epistle or Gospel is provided, but what chapters and verses comprise the readings are disclosed in the above chart and later below.

These translations (not the work of a professional but a good try at it nonetheless, even if not up to perfection) were taken care of by gathering what I could of English translations, and by referencing original Arabic texts and listening to the recordings in order to serve as guides as I made necessary alterations to the English prayers from words to sentence structure – this even includes tweaks to the familiar ‘Glory Be’ (e.g. singular ‘age of the ages’ and ‘all time’), The purpose was to produce a result as close as I could to the sequence of words chanted in the recordings rather than a seamless English translation that would sound more agreeable in expression, but would be at the expense of accuracy in relation to the Arabic. Though this may irk some (and I have provided parenthetical addendums in the form of word insertions to iron out the wrinkles in too much literal-minded work), it is I think best suited for the purposes of better following and connecting with the musical and poetic expression of these Nativity prayers in the liturgical language employed in this recording, for the point of the work is to serve as a written accompaniment to listening to these audio samples. Language buffs might actually find this useful. Naturally, one can only go so far in this approach, and I may not have been as meticulously accurate throughout, and so of course further clarification can only be achieved by learning the original language itself to be able to detect the nuances.

Note: The sections following are quite long. If this will tax patience, one can scroll down directly to where the translations begin (but do first refer to point #10 from the list towards the end to get an idea of the text's colour coding). Language geeks on the other hand may go press on and merrily trek through the swamp-infested waters straight ahead.

A word or two (much more in fact) on liturgical Arabic (or Classical Fusha Arabic) to help in following:

As in Latin, adjectives succeed their referents. Also, oftentimes the verb precedes the subject. A common sentence structure is Verb-Subject-Direct Object (though S-V-DO also occurs) – think of verbs in Elizabethan English ending in ‘-eth’, which make it easier to let the verb precede its agent (as willeth God). For the sake of providing as literal or syntactically accurate a translation as possible, I have placed verbs before subjects where they occur in the Arabic texts. And as for adjective referents’ preference in order over adjectives, I have tried to present this using the poetic medium where I could do so without doing damage to the English. Another feature of the language is the absence of ‘to be’ as a copular/linking verb in the present tense. There is no ‘is’ in Arabic; it is implied (same story in Russian if I’m not mistaken). Sometimes even, a particular word can be used as in the case of what happens following a relative pronoun or interrogative adjective, when a personal pronoun is used to imply ‘is’ (e.g. ‘the man who is king’ is literally ‘the man who he king’). Arabic has no indefinite article, but has the definite ‘*al*’ (a prefix), which possesses phonetic variants. Nouns have cases (so no English ‘of’s required for the genitive), and regarding number, there is dual to contend with in addition to singular and plural, as is the case in many archaic forms of language. As in Greek, generalities or nouns indicating absolutes or universal concepts feature the definite article (e.g. *the* Creation, *the* Mankind, powers of *the* darkness). Another feature of ‘the’ is its absence in a grammatical case of possession from the word indicating the possessed (eg. ‘house of the man’, not ‘the house of the man’).

There is no auxiliary verb in Arabic except for a couple or so. (The perfect can be implied and is sometimes indicated before the verb by *qad*.) There is a good, fair amount of conjugation for Arabic verbs (and hence like in languages such as Greek, usually do without subject pronouns and do not add an auxiliary for the passive voice), and even gender factors into this equation, unlike the grammar systems of most European languages I would think. (One of the exceptions would be Polish, which goes beyond Arabic into gender-conjugating 1st person verbs, which are exempt in Arabic.) Also, personal pronouns in the accusative/genitive form (primarily direct objects), and possessive pronouns take the form of suffixes attached to the verbs or nouns indicating the possessed, respectively. (An aside: some words, such as certain prepositions [e.g. ‘with’, indicating the use of an agent], or what would be presented as a phrase in English [the hortatory subjunctive ‘let us’], are rendered prefixes.) In the case of the possessives, I of course haven’t a way of reflecting this in English without it coming at the expense of legibility. In the end I have tried to make the following translations as faithful as I could make possible to Arabic syntax and structure, and the original Arabic text chanted in the

audio (which being Melchite proved to be at variance occasionally with the Orthodox texts I have) whilst remaining satisfactorily intelligible to the reader. I hope there are as few mistakes as possible.

An amusing fact to conclude this section: Levantine colloquial Arabic features the occasional instance of a prepositional phrase preceding a subject and the rest of a predicate, so yes, many Arabs to some degree sound like that little green goblin with the light-sabre. Frank Oz would feel right at home.

A relevant and final introductory section remains.

How to read the translations in concordance with the sequence of words sung in the recorded chants (10 points):

In stripping the text down in words to the literal Arabic core, I've still managed to maintain a large number of words and small clarifications in parenthesis to keep the meanings largely clear. These are explanatory, meant to clarify and morph the entire text into an easier English translation for the sake of meaning when one isn't following the music's literal Arabic, and so are not heard in the literal audio playback (only what is not in parenthesis is heard in the recording and corresponds to syntax and word sequence to as precise a level as was possible). So what the raw English translation and literal Arabic imply are illustrated in parenthesis. Amongst other things, this means that 'is' should be understood to be implied and that the meanings imparted by most English auxiliary verbs and subject pronouns are encapsulated within the Arabic verb itself and its conjugation, or at worst, implied by these. Subject pronouns too are parenthesised, but when they are made explicit in the original Arabic, pronounced in the audio, they appear without parenthesis.

However, discounting all the parenthetical notes and returning to the literal core Arabic, the un-parenthesised English text, even this will fall short of a perfect order of word sequence and accurate word structure since clarity demands it. And so following are the audible chants' points of divergence from what is written in the raw, un-parenthesised translation. To help you better follow the audio with the translation in hand, keep these 10 points in mind when listening to the chant and reading the un-parenthesised text; they are not reflected in the text (after this follows a summary of these points; you can skip down to those now and give them a quick look before continuing – it is good to write your own notes if you would like to commit these to memory):

1) The indefinite article does not exist in Arabic and will not be heard. The vocative 'O' exists as *ya* or the gender-determined *ay'yuha* / *ay'yatuha*, and is shown in the English text.

2) The 'of' used in the genitive does not exist in Arabic and will not be heard. It is reflected by case declensions. Also, the word indicating the possessed does not have the definite article ('in womb of the Virgin', not 'in *the* womb of the Virgin' as the English text has it for intelligibility).

3) An adjective is always preceded by its referent. I was not always able to insert this word order into the translation. Also, both words have the definite article if whatever is described is definite (e.g. ‘the white house’ is heard as ‘the house the white’).

4) Possessive pronouns and accusative/genitive personal pronouns (direct objects or objects of prepositions) are suffixes attached to the relevant verb, noun, or preposition (e.g. ‘his big house’ is literally ‘house + suffix representing ‘his’, or in full, ‘house[+sfx] the big’). (There are cases, quite fewer in my estimation, where these non-nominative personal pronouns are stand-alone words: ‘*iy’yaa* + those very same suffixes’) Taking all possible declensions into account, these suffixes sound at the end of a word as the first-person *ni* (or *i*) or *na* alone, the second-person *k*, usually followed by a vowel, sometimes with more letters in addition, or the third-person *h* succeeded by letters in the same way as the second person. There are times when these suffixes sound, but are not written into the English translation (for sake of legibility), normally when after a non-nominative relative pronoun (whether visible or implied), a personal pronoun suffix is uttered in the phrase or clause following to refer back to what the relative pronoun points to (e.g. what is written as ‘the man whom we saw’ literally sounds ‘the man whom we saw him’ [‘him’ attached to ‘saw’]; or what is written as ‘around which we went’ sounds ‘which we went around it’ [‘it’ attached to ‘around’]). This is when one would hear the pronoun suffix in the recording, but see no sign of it as an English pronoun in the translation.

5) Some words such as certain prepositions and particles are prefixes (e.g. the particle ‘so’ as in for example ‘so we decided to...’ [*fa*], or ‘with’, indicating the use of an agent [*bi*], or the hortatory subjunctive ‘let’, [*li*]). Sometimes more than one prefix join together and attach to the same word (e.g. ‘so let...’ [*fal(i)*]). There is also the case of a prefix attaching to a suffix, with no base word between the two, an example being a prefix preposition followed by a personal pronoun suffix in genitive form (e.g. ‘to you’ [*laka*]). Also, the English prefix ‘un’ is a separate word in Arabic, *ghair* + vowel case ending (with the prefix *bi*, the result, *bi-ghairi*, becomes ‘without’). So where you see in the English text *un-adjective*, you will hear two words: ‘*ghair* + vowel case ending’, followed by the adjective. Finally, many prepositions are stand-alone words, but because one (perhaps more), *fi*, (not to be confused with the prepositional prefix *bi*) is short and monosyllabic, and may phonetically connect through elision with the word following, the ear can mistake it for a prefix.

6) The auxiliary ‘have/has/had’ to form the perfect is un-parenthesised when the main verb is preceded by an explicit *qad*. The emphatic nominative personal pronoun (‘he’, ‘she’, etc.) is un-parenthesised when it makes an explicit appearance in the Arabic, or in the exceptional cases where it appears as a subject pronoun in the accusative/genitive suffix form attached to *in’na* (explained in point #10), *laakin’na* (but), *li’an’na* (because), or other words prompting the same treatment of it.

7) The linking verb ‘is’ in the present tense does not exist in Arabic. Three times only in this translation is the word ‘is’ un-parenthesised, when what is actually sounded is one of the nominative-case pronouns ‘He’ (*huwa*), and She (*hiya*), used to imply ‘is’; this can

occur after a relative pronoun or interrogative adjective (e.g. ‘the man who is king’ is literally ‘the man who he king’).

8) The definite article *al* is a prefix (which can pop up in a few places where ‘the’ doesn’t appear in English – and these exceptions don’t make an appearance in the translation but can be heard) and although written in the same way at all times in Arabic script, has phonetic variances due to the ‘cursive-sounding’ nature of Arabic pronunciation, which features strong elision (especially where *al* is concerned) and syncopation, which is why the often seen al-hyphen prefix in English transliterations can be off the mark. The ‘a’ in *al* might be replaced by the final vowel letter of the word preceding. Also, a certain class of letters called sun letters (termed so because the first letter of ‘sun’ has the properties of this class) demands the ‘l’ of the article be dropped and a fusion with the following noun’s first letter occur. So for example, since ‘r’ is a sun letter, it’s *Bis’mil-Laahir-Rahmaanir-Raheem*, not *Bis’mil’Lahil-Rahmaanil-Raheem*. So a made-up insult such as ‘al-dufus’ is an egregious mistake in proper phonetics. :-)

9) I should mention one word that regularly appears in Arabic sentences and these MP3s: *in’na*, (sometimes *an’na*) either alone and usually followed by a subject noun, or, as mentioned in point #6, with a subject (nominative) personal pronoun suffix attached to it in accusative/genitive form (e.g. *in’nahu*, *in’nani*, *in’naki*, etc., one of the two ways a normally-absent, emphatic subject pronoun makes its appearance in Arabic, the other being the pronoun simply standing alone as an individual word in nominative form: *huwa*, *hiya*, etc.). *In’na* (in the beginning of sentences – elsewhere, it may take on other meanings, such as that of the subordinating conjunction ‘that’) is very peculiar and tricky to translate and doesn’t really have an English equivalent (and so, minus its pronoun suffix when present, it does not appear in the translations below when it sounds in playback, unless it employs any of its other definitions). Dictionaries may put it as ‘truly’ or ‘certainly’ but it is much less direct and declarative than that. I believe it also slightly affects the tense of a verb in the sentence that follows it, sometimes giving it a progressive quality. For all intents and purposes here, I can only describe it as a subtle nuance that ‘sets up’ the declarative sentence, announcing its appearance.

10) Finally, the plethora of prefixes, suffixes, and syncopation in Arabic may make it tricky to hear where a word begins and where it ends. To help, I have highlighted prefixes in red and suffixes in blue, these presented as full words in English text, but not so in Arabic audio. (Noting the aforementioned explanations of times when word order is not represented exactly, you should be able to know whether in the English text the suffix is attached to the word immediately preceding it or following it [the case with possessive pronouns], or even to the textually absent *in’na*, for that matter. Prefixes, though are certain not to attach and belong to the words preceding them in the text) The definite article ‘the’ (*al*) and the conjunction ‘and’ (*wa*) are always prefixes and are not coded in colour. Hopefully, repetition of common liturgical words and the format of the translations below should help in making it easier to listen to the MP3 chants, which are quite solid in their quality. Musical punctuation and expression should also provide much assistance, so one best use his ears as well. Good luck.

In summary, keep these basics in mind as you read and listen, to make the un-parenthesised text almost entirely accurate with respect to the audio (the relevant points to each summarised line below are indicated through the numbers in bold):

- Disregard ‘a’, ‘an’, and the genitive ‘of’. The vocative ‘O’ is literal and is heard in the Arabic playback in one of two forms. **#1 & #2**
- Disregard ‘is’, except in the three cases described in **#7**
- Put adjectives after their referents. **#3**
- Keep in mind what the pronoun suffixes are, according to person (and remember the exceptional stand-alone form of those pronouns). Note that some redundant ones that sound – those that occur near relative pronouns – are not included in the text for legibility’s sake. **#4**
- Consider ‘un-*adjective*’ as two words in audio: ‘*ghair* + vowel case ending’ and Arabic adjective. Remember that *ghair* with the prefix *bi* is ‘without’ (*bi-ghairi*). **#5**
- Keep listening for *qad*. In cases of the perfect tense where this word sounds, the English auxiliary verb is made explicit (i.e. un-parenthesised) in the text to reflect this. **#6**
- When the emphatic subject personal pronoun is made explicit in the text, it sounds in audio in one of its two forms, either as a stand-alone or a suffix at the end of certain words. **#6 & #10**
- Remember that ‘the’ has phonetic variants and that it doesn’t always appear precisely where it is indicated in the text. **#2 & #3 & #8**
- Keep listening for *in’na* (or *an’na*). It is not represented in the English text when it takes on a certain definition, normally at the start of a sentence or an independent clause. This is done because of difficulty of translation and the irrelevance of this particular definition in English. **#9**
- Follow the **colour coding** for prefixes and suffixes (those that are so in Arabic audio but rendered as whole words in English) throughout, remembering that ‘the’ and ‘and’ are prefixes which have not been highlighted in colour because of their frequent appearances, and take care to know to which words textually (of course in audio, suffixes always by definition attach to the end of the words to which they belong) suffixes belong and are attached, whether they be the words they immediately precede or, as in the case of possessive pronouns, succeed in the text (or even the textually absent *in’na*). (In the text, prefixes will always belong to the word following.) Remember also you will hear some redundant suffixes not in the text, near where relative pronouns are found. **#4 & #10**

That’s enough homework; the translations are next. Enjoy.

TRANSLATIONS

Prefixes in **red**, suffixes in **blue**

‘And’ (*wa*) and ‘the’ (*al* and phonetic variants) are always prefixes, and not highlighted here in colour

Today the Virgin [Preparation]

Kontakion Preparatory for the Nativity

Today the Virgin cometh to the cave **to** bear the Word Who (is) before the ages, a birth (that is) not explained (i.e. unexplainable) and (is) not spoken of (i.e. ineffable).

Therefore rejoice, O Universe, if (thou hast) heard, and glorify with the angels and shepherds (He) Who willed to appear (as) a Child, a new Child, and He (is) a God before the ages.

Thy Nativity, O Christ [Arabic followed by Greek]

Troparion of the Nativity

Thy Nativity, O Christ **our** God, hath shined the light of knowledge **in** the world; because the prostrating **to** the stars (participle; i.e. they who do so), **through it** learned from the star the (act of) prostrating **to Thee**, O Sun of Justice, and (they) knew that **Thou** (art) the rising* Who (is) from (on) high. O Lord, glory **to Thee**.

Η γεννησις σου Χριστε ο Θεος ημων, ανετειλε τω κοσμω το φως το της γνωσεως, εν αυτη γαρ οι τοις αστροις λατρευοντες, υπο αστερος εδιδασκοντο, σε προσκυνειν, τον Ηλιον της δικαιοσυνης, και σε γινωσκειν εξ υψους ανατολην, Κυριε δοξα σοι.

* Some have translated the word in this sentence as the ‘Dayspring’, as the sun springs from the east? In Arabic, the sun ‘east’, or rises, and ‘west’, or sets. With respect to etymology, the rising of the sun and its setting are its ‘easting’ and ‘westing’ respectively. Amongst the definitions of Al-Mashriq (‘east’ is Ash-sharq), the word used here in the sentence marked with the asterisk, is the land of the rising sun, the Levant and beyond, eastwards, and ‘Levant’ itself comes from the Latin *levare*, to rise. The meaning of all this of course is clear: Christ is to Christians as the rising sun of the East, and hence the [long-running and ancient tradition of worshipping towards the East](#). The Byzantine prayers referring to Christ as *al-Mashriq*, particularly during Christmas, further reinforce this tradition that has been abandoned by folks who have a knack for forging antiquarian arguments (antiquarianism should not be confused with traditionalism) in defence of liturgical destruction and who claim to be enamoured with the traditions of the Early Church.

Come, O ye Faithful

Sessional Hymn of the Nativity Matins

Come, O (ye) faithful, **let** (us) behold where born (is) Christ. And **let** (us) follow therefore the star to where (it) travels, with the Magi, kings of the east; **for** there (i.e. over there) shepherds stay (the night, keeping watch), and angels praise, crying **without**

lukewarmness, **in** a praise worthy: Glory **to** God in the highest, Who (wast) born today in a cave from the Virgin, the Bearer of God in Bethlehem of Judaea.

Why Dost Thou Marvel O Mary?

Why (dost) (thou) marvel O Mary; why (dost) (thou) (be) astonish(ed) in **thy** inner (self)? Because **I** (have) borne in a (moment in) time a Son unbound in time; and (I do) not comprehend the manner of the conceiving **with** the Born (i.e. conceiving the Born, or the conception of the Born). **For** how (do I) bear a Son and (I have) not known a man? Who (hath) seen a day (i.e. has ever seen) a birth **without** seed? But where willeth the God, overcome (is) the order of Nature, as (wast) written: Christ (is) (i.e. to be; becomes) born from the Virgin in Bethlehem of Judaea.

The Nativity Epistle [Galatians: 4:4-7]

Reference a Bible. The Epistle concludes with some Psalm verses.

Since my Youth [Psalm Verses]

Since **my** youth many pains (or 'griefs') war (against) **me**, then fight **me**, but Thou O **my** Saviour, help **me** and deliver **me**.

All who hate Zion (are put to) shame from before the Lord (i.e. put to shame before the Lord), because **they** become as the dry grass before the fire.

Glory **to** the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

By the Holy Spirit, quickeneth every soul and (is) purified, exalted and brilliant **by** the One* Trinity.

Now and all time, and unto the age of the ages. Amen.

By the Holy Spirit, overfloweth the streams of grace and **its** channels, **so** (it) showers Creation, all of **it**, **with** life everlasting, invigorating.

From the womb before the morning star, (I) begot **Thee**: sworn (hath) the Lord and (will) not repent. (2)

Said the Lord **unto my** Lord: Sit at **My** right so (I) make **Thine** enemies a stool **for Thy** feet.

From the womb before the morning star, (I) begot **Thee**: sworn (hath) the Lord and (will) not repent.

* The word 'One' is according to the Arabic Orthodox texts, but it appears to be rendered differently in the recording. Unfortunately, the playback is not sufficiently clear and in

the absence of any confident guess ('the Only Trinity' or 'the Only-Pure Trinity' perhaps?) on my part after listening carefully, I leave the word as it is, in agreement with the text.

The Gospel [Luke: 2:1-14]

Reference a Bible.

The Idiomelon

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. Now and ever, and unto the ages of the ages. Amen. **(In Greek)**

Today Creation **in its** entirety fills (becomes filled) (with) joy **in** the birth of the Christ from the Virgin.

Mercy (N.B. transitive verb in Arabic) **me** O God, **according** (to) **Thy** great mercy; and **as** according (to) the multitude of **Thy** mercies (or 'compassion'), 'blot out' (N.B. one word) **my** transgressions.

Glory **to** God in the highest, and on earth peace. Today received Bethlehem (i.e. Bethlehem received) the (He Who is) always (at all times) ever-sitting with the Father. Today the angels glorify, as befits **with** God (i.e. as befits God'), the born Child, crying: Glory **to** God in the highest, and on earth peace, and amongst men (N.B. literally 'people') joy.

Come, Let us See

Come, (let us) see how Bethlehem hath opened the closed Eden. Come, (let us) find joy in the place of hiding (i.e. hidden place): come, (let us) seize the goods (i.e. many things of good and beauty) of Paradise from inside the cave, because there (i.e. over there), hath appeared **without** watering (i.e. unwatered), a Root, branching from **it** forgiveness: there (i.e. over there), hath (been) found a Well undug, had longed David to drink from **it** old (i.e. long ago; in other words, 'to drink from it from of old'). There the Virgin (hath) borne a Babe, **so** (it) pacified immediately the thirst of Adam and David. **So let** (us) approach to **it** (i.e. to this place), **for** hath (been) born a Child, a new Child, and He (is) a God before the ages.

He Whom All Containeth Not

(He) Whom (doth) not contain **Him** all (i.e. He Whom all containeth not [cannot contain]), how (wast He) contained in the womb? And Who (is) in the bosom of the Father, how (is He) carried on the arms of the Mother? **For** hath passed this (i.e. been completed) as knew and willed and (wast) pleased (to do) He; because **He**, and He (is) the (One) lacking of body, hath incarnated **by His** choice. And Who is un-shining* hath become (or 'hath turned') **for our** sake (into) what (He) wast not (N.B. exact order: 'not

wast', like the demotic Greek 'δεν η των'), and (He) hath shared (with) **us** in **our** nature, inseparable (i.e. not separated) from **His** essence. Christ (hath been) born **with** (two) Natures (N.B. dual reflected in declension), desiring to renew the heavenly world.

*Audio wasn't clear enough to hear clearly this word not found in the Orthodox texts referenced; this is my best guess and it doesn't appear satisfactory.

Christ is Born

Christ (is) born, **so** glorify **Him**. Christ (hath) come from the heavens, **so** receive **Him**. Christ (is) on Earth, **so** elevate **Him**. O (you) Earth, all of **it**, sing **unto** the Lord, and ye peoples (nations), praise **Him in** joy, because **He** hath (been) glorified.

Let (us) cry towards the Son born from the Father before all the ages **without** change, Christ the God, Who incarnated in the last (of) times **without** seed from the Virgin, saying, "O (Thou) Who elevated **our** state, holy (art) Thou, O Lord."

O Christ, of all praise, the (One) free from matter (i.e. incorporeal), hath exited (or 'come out') a rod from the root of Jesse, and from **it** (hast) sprouted a flower from a mountain, shadowed and dense (of dense forest), **so** (Thou) camest incarnate from the Virgin who (hadst) not known a man. Glory **to Thy** might, O Lord.

O Lover of Mankind, as **Thou** (art) the God of peace and the Father of mercies, (Thou) sentest **to us** the great* messenger of **Thy** mind, granting us **Thy** peace. (And) **so** wherefore, lo, (we) have (been) led to the light of knowledge divine, so (we) 'come out' (N.B. one word) from the night, glorifying Thee.

As the sea-whale (or 'sea-monster') received in **its** belly Jonah, and threw (ejected) **him**, safe as the foetus, thusly the Word dwelt in the Virgin, and took (on) a body, and (wast) born preserving her **without**** corruption, and abided **without** change, preserving **His** Mother **without** harm.

* 'Great' sounds after 'mind', though it describes 'messenger'.

** *Bi-la* and *bi-ghair* are more or less synonymous.

Today the Virgin

Kontakion of the Nativity

Today the Virgin beareth the Transcendent of (i.e. in) Essence; and the earth presenteth (or 'offereth') the cave **to** Who (is) not approached from (i.e. unapproachable); the angels with the shepherds glorify; and the Magi with the star travel; because for **our** sake (hath been) born a new Child, and He (is) a God before the ages.

The Hirmos

The youths, as **they** grew (up) on the goodness of worship (or ‘on good-worship’ or right-worship’), had disdained the decree of the oppressor and (did) not fear (i.e. become afraid) from the flame of the fire, but **they** stood in the midst of the flames, singing, "Blessed (art) Thou, O God of **our** Fathers."

The dewy furnace hath portrayed the sign of the wonder transcendent of (i.e. in) nature (i.e. supernatural wonder), **for** (just) as **it** (did) not burn the youths whom (it) received, (as) so the Fire of the Divinity (did) not burn also the repository of the Virgin which (it) dwelt within. Wherefore, **so let** (us) praise, singing and saying, "**Let** bless Creation **in its** entirety the Lord and **let** (it) increase **Him** (in) dignity unto the end (or ‘the extent’) of the ages."

Today is Born from the Virgin

Today (is) born from the Virgin (He) Who held Creation **in His** grasp. [thrice]

And Who is in **His** Essence Untouchable (is) wrapped **in** (or ‘with’) ‘swaddling clothes’ (N.B. one word) **as** a Man (literally ‘Human Being’). The God Who fixed the heavens (from of) old (is made to) lieth (down; in passive voice) now in a manger. And (the One) Who showered on **His** People in drops manna feedeth **on** milk from the (two) breasts (N.B. dual reflected in declension). The Bridegroom of the Church calleth the Magi. And the Son of the Virgin accepteth the gifts.

(We) bow **to thy** Nativity, O Christ. [thrice]

So show **us Thy** Divine Appearance (Theophany).

The Ninth Ode

Magnify, O **my** soul, (her) who is ‘more honourable’ (N.B. one word for this comparative) (in) measure and ‘more exalted’ (N.B. one word for this comparative) (in) glory than the heavenly hosts.

I behold a mystery strange. The cave (is) a heaven, and the Virgin (is) a throne cherubic, and the manger (is) a place noble (that hath) lain in **it** Christ the God Whom (doth) not containeth **Him** a place (i.e. any place), **so let** (us) praise **Him**, magnifying.
