

## 1. What is a "canon"?

- a) "a poetic composition that consists theoretically of nine Odes, based in inspiration on the nine chief Odes, or Canticles– eight of the Old Testament and one of the New Testament. Each Ode consists of a model brief hymn at the beginning called the *Hirmos* (Εἱρμός) followed by two or more *Troparia* that are like the *Hirmos* in structure and are chanted in the same fashion. As each Ode corresponds to one of the Canticles, it is expected to contain some allusion to the subject of the Canticle or some reminiscence of its style" (Cavarnos 1979, 41).
- b) The canons of St. John Damascene follow a nine ode system (Louth 2005, 198):
1. the Israelites' song of victory after the crossing of the Red Sea (Ex. 15: 1-19)
  2. Moses' canticle exhorting the Israelites to follow the Law (Deut. 32: 1-43);
  3. the song of Samuel's mother Anna (1 Kings 2:1-10),
  4. of Habacuc (3.1-13),
  5. Isaiah (26:9-20)
  6. Jonah (2:3-10), and
  7. the song of the three young men in the fiery furnace,
  8. broken into two parts (Dan. 3:26-56, 3:57-88);
  9. the ninth ode combines the *Magnificat* and *Benedictus* (Luke 1:46-57; 68-79).

## 2. St. John Chrysostom & Moses at the Transfiguration

*Homily 56 on the Gospel of Matthew*  
(PG 58.549-558)

Trans. Daley 2013

1: Christ, the Master > prophets, His servants

Τίνος δὲ ἔνεκεν καὶ Μωϋσῆν καὶ Ἠλίαν εἰς μέσον ἄγει; Πολλὰς ἂν ἔχοι τις εἰπεῖν αἰτίας· καὶ πρόπην μὲν ταύτην, ὅτι ἐπειδὴ οἱ ὄχλοι ἔλεγον, οἱ μὲν Ἠλίαν, οἱ δὲ Ἰερεμίαν, οἱ δὲ ἓνα τῶν ἀρχαίων προφητῶν, τοὺς κορθφαίους ἄγει, ἵνα τὸ μέσον καὶ ἐντεῦθεν ἴδωσι τῶν δούλων καὶ τοῦ Δεσπότη, καὶ ὅτι καλῶς ἐπηνέθη Πέτρος ὁμολογήσας αὐτὸν Υἱὸν Θεοῦ.

And for what reason does he bring Moses and Elijah onto the scene? One might offer a number of reasons. First this: that since "some" of the crowd "said he was Elijah, others Jeremiah or one of the ancient prophets," he brought the leading prophets there, so that even from them one might see the difference between servants and the master, and how right it was that Peter was praised for confessing him to be Son of God.

## 2: To show approval of the Old Law for Christ

Μετ' ἐκείνην δὲ καὶ ἑτέραν ἔστιν εἰπεῖν.  
Ἐπειδὴ γὰρ συνεχῶς ἐνεκάλουν αὐτῷ τὸ  
παραβαίνειν τὸν νόμον, καὶ βλάσφημον αὐτὸν  
εἶναι ἐνόμιζον, ὡς σφετεριζόμενον δόξαν οὐ  
προσήκουσαν αὐτῷ τὴν τοῦ Πατρὸς ... ἵνα  
δειχθῆ ὅτι βασκανίας ἀμφοτέρα τὰ  
ἐγκλήματα, καὶ ἑκατέρων τούτων ἐστὶν  
ἀνεύθυνος, καὶ οὔτε νόμου παράβασις τὸ  
γινόμενον, οὔτε δόξης σφετερισμὸς τῆς μὴ  
προσηκούσης τὸ λέγειν ἑαυτὸν ἴσον τῷ Πατρὶ,  
τοὺς ἐν ἑκατέρῳ λάμπαντας τούτων εἰς μέσον  
ἄγει. **Καὶ γὰρ Μωϋσῆς τὸν νόμον ἔδωκε, καὶ  
ἠδύναντο λογίσασθαι Ἰουδαῖοι, ὅτι οὐκ ἂν  
περιεῖδε πατούμενον αὐτὸν, ὡς ἐνόμιζον,  
οὐδ' ἂν τὸν παραβαίνοντα αὐτὸν καὶ τῷ  
τεθεικότι πολέμιον ὄντα ἐθεράπευσεν ἂν.**

But secondly, one may also say something else. People constantly charged him with transgressing the law, and considered him a blasphemer, usurping for himself the glory that belonged to the Father ... So, that it might be obvious that both these charges were based on jealousy, and that he was innocent of both of them, and that what had happened was not a transgression of the law, nor his saying he was equal to the Father a usurpation of a glory that did not belong to him, he brought into his presence the shining authorities on both these issues. **Moses, after all, gave the law, and the Jews could be convinced that he would not stand by and watch it be trampled under foot, as they suspected, nor would he be conciliatory towards anyone who was transgressing it and hostile to its giver.**

## 3. Christ = Lord of Living and the Dead

Ἔστι δὲ καὶ ἑτέραν αἰτίαν εἰπεῖν μετὰ τῶν εἰρημένων. Ποίαν δὴ ταύτην; Ἴνα μάθωσιν, ὅτι καὶ θανάτου καὶ ζωῆς ἐξουσίαν ἔχει, καὶ τῶν ἄνω καὶ τῶν κάτω κρατεῖ. Διὰ τοῦτο καὶ τὸν τετελευτηκότα, καὶ τὸν οὐδέπω τοῦτο παθόντα εἰς μέσον ἄγει.

One might mention another reason, along with those we have given. What is that? That they might learn that he has authority over death and life, and rules both what is above and what is below. So he brings on the scene both one who is dead and one who never suffered that fate.

## 4 (5?): to encourage the Apostles for Christ's Passion and their own sufferings.

Τὴν δὲ πέμπτην αἰτίαν (πέμπτη γὰρ αὕτη ἐστὶ πρὸς ταῖς εἰρημέναις) καὶ αὐτὸς ὁ εὐαγγελιστὴς ἀπεκάλυψε. Τίς δὲ ἦν αὕτη; Δεῖξαι τοῦ σταυροῦ τὴν δόξαν, καὶ παραμυτήσασθαι τὸν Πέτρον καὶ ἐκείνους δεδαικτότας τὸ πάθος, καὶ ἀναστῆσαι αὐτῶν τὰ φρονήματα. Καὶ γὰρ παραγενόμενοι οὐ ἐσίγων, ἀλλ' Ἐλάλουν, φησὶ, τὴν δόξαν, ἣν ἔμελλε κληροῦν ἐν Ἱερουσαλήμ· τουτέστι, τὸ πάθος καὶ τὸν σταυρόν· οὕτω γὰρ αὐτὸ καλοῦσιν αἰεὶ.

And the fifth reason—for this is the fifth among all we have given—the Evangelist himself revealed. What is it? To show forth the glory of the cross, and to encourage Peter and the others who were in dread of suffering, and raise their thoughts higher. For as they [=Moses and Elijah] came to the spot, they were not silent, but “were speaking,” Scripture says, “of the glory that he was to bring to fulfillment in Jerusalem”; the Passion, that is, and the cross, for that is what they always call it.

### 3. The Canon as “Traditional”

#### 1. Christ the Master, Prophets His Servants (3:2)

συμπαρέστησαν ὁ Μωσῆς καὶ Ἡλίας ὡς Θεοῦ θεράποντες. Moses and Elias stood there as servants of God

#### 2. Moses as Lawgiver (1:3)

a) Mt. Sinai described as τοῦ ὄρους τοῦ νομικοῦ, “the mountain of the law.”

#### 3. Christ, Lord of the Living and the Dead (5:1, 8:3)

ὡς κρατῶν ζωῆς γὰρ καὶ θανάτου δεσπόζων as ruling over life and being lord over death.

ὡς οὐρανοῦ δεσπόζοντι, καὶ τῆς γῆς βασιλεύοντι, καὶ καταχθονίων τὴν κυρίαν ἔχοντι, Χριστὲ, σοὶ παρέστησαν, ἐκ μὲν τῆς γῆς ἀπόστολοι, ὡς ἐξ οὐρανοῦ δὲ, ὁ Θεβίτης Ἡλίας, Μωσῆς δὲ ἐκ νεκράδων.

as to the ruler of heaven and to the ruler of the earth, and to the one having lordship over those living on earth, Christ, they stood by you, on the one hand the apostles from earth, on the other hand Elias the Thebite from heaven, and Moses from the dead.

#### 4. Moses as *exemplum* for the Apostles: ....

#### 4. The Acrostic: a *cantus firmus* for the canon

Μωσῆς Θεοῦ πρόσωπον ἐν Θαβωρ ἶδε    Moses God's face on Mt. Thabor saw.

#### 5. Moses the Seer in the *Canon for the Transfiguration*:

##### 1. Ode 1

Μωσῆς ἐν θαλάσση προφητικῶς, ἰδὼν ἐν  
νεφέλῃ καὶ ἐν στύλῳ πάλαι πυρός, τὴν  
δόξαν Κυρίου ἀνεβόα· τῷ Λυτρωτῇ καὶ Θεῷ  
ἡμῶν ἄσωμεν.

Moses by the sea long ago **prophetically  
seeing in the cloud and in the pillar of fire  
the glory of the Lord** shouted “to our Savior  
and God let us sing”

Ὡς πέτρα τῷ σώματι σκεπασθεῖς, τῷ  
τεθεωμένῳ, τὸν ἀόρατον καθορῶν, Μωσῆς  
ὁ θεόπτης ἀνεβόα· τῷ Λυτρωτῇ καὶ Θεῷ  
ἡμῶν ἄσωμεν.

**Having been hidden by the divine body as a  
rock**, seeing the unseeable, **Moses the one  
who saw God** shouted: “to our Savior and God  
let us sing.”

Σὺ ἐπὶ τοῦ ὄρους τοῦ νομικοῦ, καὶ ἐν  
Θαβωρίῳ, καθωράθης τῷ Μωϋσῆ, ἐν γνόφῳ  
τὸ πάλαι, ἐν φωτὶ δέ, νῦν ἀπροσίτῳ τῆς  
Θεότητος.

You at the mountain of the law and on Thabor  
were seen by Moses, previously **in the stormy  
darkness**, but now **in the unapproachable  
light** of the divinity.

##### 2. Ode 3

Ἡ σκιάζουσα δόξα, ἐν τῇ σκηνῇ πρότερον,  
καὶ τῷ Μωϋσῆ ὁμιλοῦσα, τῷ σῷ θεράποντι,  
τύπος γεγένηται, τῆς ἀστραψάσης ἀρρήτως, ἐν  
Θαβῶρ σου Δέσποτα Μεταμορφώσεως.

**The glory once overshadowing the  
Tabernacle, and conversing with Moses your  
servant** has become a type of the ineffable  
brilliance on Thabor of your Transfiguration,  
Lord.

Συνανηλθέ σοι Λόγε, μονογενὲς ὕψιστε, ἡ τῶν  
Ἀποστόλων ἀκρότης, ἐπὶ τοῦ ὄρους Θαβῶρ,  
καὶ συμπαρέστησαν ὅ,τε Μωσῆς καὶ Ἠλίας,  
ὡς Θεοῦ θεράποντες, μόνε φιλάνθρωπε.

The elect of the Apostles came to Mount  
Thabor with you, Logos, only-begotten, Most  
High, and Moses and Elias were also present as  
servants of God, You who alone are kindly to  
men.

Θεὸς ὅλος ὑπάρχων, ὅλος βροτὸς γέγονας,  
ὅλη τῇ Θεότητι μίξας τὴν ἀνθρωπότητα, ἐν  
ὑποστάσει σου, ἦν ἐν δυσι ταῖς οὐσίαις,  
Μωϋσῆς Ἠλίας τε, εἶδον ἐν ὄρει Θαβῶρ.

Existing as true God, having become true man,  
having completely mixed humanity with the  
divinity in your substance, which in two  
natures Moses and Elias saw on Mt. Thabor.

3. Ode 4

«Ἐκ σαρκός σου βολίδες Θεότητος,  
ἐξεπορεύοντο, Προφητῶν καὶ Ἀποστόλων·  
ὅθεν οἱ πρόκριτοι, μέλποντες ἀνεβόων·  
Δόξα τῇ δυνάμει σου Κύριε».

Ὁ τὴν βάτον φυλάζας ἀλώβητον,  
προσομιλοῦσαν πυρί, τῷ Μωσεῖ  
θεολαμποῦσαν σάρκα ὑπέδειξας, Δέσποτα  
μελωδοῦντι· Δόξα τῇ δυνάμει σου Κύριε.

...

Πῦρ μὴ φλέγον τὴν ὕλην τοῦ σώματος,  
ώραθης ἄϋλον, ὡς Μωσεῖ καὶ Ἀποστόλοις,  
ῶφθης Ἥλια τε, Δέσποτα εἷς ἐκ δύο, ἐν δυσι  
τελείαις ταῖς φύσεσιν.

4. Ode 6

Ὡς μέγα καὶ φοβερον, ώραθη θέαμα  
σήμερον! ἐξ οὐρανοῦ αἰσθητός, ἐκ γῆς δὲ  
ἀσύγκριτος, ἐξήστραπεν ἥλιος, τῆς  
δικαιοσύνης, νοητὸς ἐπὶ τοῦ ὄρους Θαβώρ.

Παρῆλθε μὲν ἡ σκιά, τοῦ νόμου  
ἐξασθενήσασα, ἐλήλυθε δὲ σαφῶς, Χριστὸς  
ἡ ἀλήθεια, Μωσῆς ἀνεβόησεν ἐν τῷ  
Θαβωρίῳ, κατιδὼν σου τὴν Θεότητα.

Ὁ στῦλος τῷ Μωϋσεῖ, Χριστὸν τὸν  
μεταμορφουμένον, ἡ δὲ νεφέλη σαφῶς, τὴν  
χάριν τοῦ Πνεύματος, τὴν ἐπισκίασασαν, ἐν  
τῷ Θαβωρίῳ, παρεδήλου ἐμφανέστατα.

5. Ode 9

Ἵνα σου δείξης ἐμφανῶς, τὴν ἀπόρρητον  
δευτέραν κατάβασιν, ὅπως ὁ Ὑψιστος Θεός,  
ὀφθήσῃ ἐστὼς ἐν μέσῳ θεῶν, τοῖς Ἀποστόλοις  
ἐν Θαβώρ, Μωσεῖ σὺν Ἥλια τε, ἀρρήτως  
ἐλαμψας· διὸ πάντες σε Χριστὲ μεγαλύνομεν.

**From Your flesh lightning-flashes of divinity  
shot outwards** upon the prophets and apostles,  
whence the elect singing shout “Glory to your  
power, Lord.”

You having protected **the burning bush  
covered in fire**, you Lord, have shown your  
flesh shining with divinity to Moses, who  
sings, “Glory to your power, Lord.”

You have been seen as **an immaterial fire not  
burning the matter of the body**, as you were  
seen by Moses and the Apostles and Elias, o  
Lord, one from two, in two perfect natures.

**How great and fearful the sight seen today!**  
In the sky the material sun, from the earth the  
incomparable sun of justice shone, perceptible  
to the mind on Mount Thabor.

**The shadow of the law, having grown weak,  
has gone away, and the truth has clearly  
come, oh Christ, Moses shouted on Thabor,  
seeing Your divinity.**

The pillar prefigured the transfigured Christ to  
Moses, and the cloud clearly prefigured the  
overshadowing grace of the Spirit, made most  
clear on Thabor.

So that You might clearly foretell Your  
ineffable second coming, when as the Most  
High God You will be seen standing in the  
midst of gods, You shone unspeakably to the  
Apostles on Thabor, **with Moses and Elias**; on  
account of these things we praise You, Christ.

Δεῦτέ μοι πείθεσθε λαοί, ἀναβάντες εἰς τὸ ὄρος τὸ Ἅγιον, τὸ ἐπουράνιον ἀύλως στῶμεν ἐν πόλει ζῶντος Θεοῦ, **καὶ ἐποπτεύσωμεν νοῦ Θεότητα ἄυλον, Πατρός καὶ Πνεύματος, ἐν Υἱῷ μονογενεῖ ἀπαστράπτουσαν.**

Come people follow me, ascending the holy heavenly mountain let us stand in the city of the living God, and **let us gaze upon with our mind the immaterial divinity of the Father and the Spirit shining in the only begotten Son.**

Ἔθελξας πόθῳ με Χριστέ, καὶ ἠλλοίωσας τῷ Θείῳ σου ἔρωτι, ἀλλὰ κατάφλεξον, πυρὶ ἀύλω τὰς ἀμαρτίας μου, καὶ ἐμπλησθῆναι τῆς ἐν σοὶ τρυφῆς καταξίωσον, ἵνα τὰς δύο σκιριτῶν, μεγαλύνω ἀγαθὲ παρουσίας σου.

**You have struck me with desire, Christ, and changed me by Your divine love,** but burn away my sins with immaterial fire and and deign to fill me with your nourishment, so that rejoicing in both, I praise, holy one, your two comings.

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