

THE SECOND CANON FOR PENTECOST

INTRODUCTION

The Iambic Canon for Pentecost is one of the most difficult in the service books. There are problems about the author. The *Pentecostaria* give his name as 'Kyr John [of] Arklas' and this is commonly taken to refer to St John of Damascus, largely on the strength of his having written iambic canons for Christmas and Theophany. This identification was questioned quite early and St Mark of Ephesus denies it is by John of Damascus, 'Another canon by, some say, John of Damascus, but others by Monk John [of] Arklas, to whose view I rally.'

Eustathios of Thessaloniki in the 12th century notes that the canon differs stylistically from the other two, but nevertheless, after considerable wavering, comes to the conclusion that it is undoubtedly the work of John of Damascus. This leaves unexplained the curious epithet 'Arklas'. Eustathos implies an etymology based on the word *arkla*, a non-classical word derived from the Latin *arca*, or 'box' by way of a Latin diminutive *arcula*. This would appear, in his view to be some sort of obscure joke. This idea shocks Bartholomew of Koutloumsiou, who edited the current text of the *Pentecostarion* in 1832, and he suggests a link with another meaning of *arkla*, namely a sort of watch-tower or turret. This he feels is a suitably honorific epithet for one who was 'a ever vigilant sentinel and guardian of the traditions of the Fathers against the assaults of heretics'. St Nikodemos defends the attribution to St John of Damascus. Even Lampe's *Patristic Lexicon* cannot make up its, some entries marking the canon as spurious, others as authentic.

The question remains open. What is not in doubt is that the language of this canon is singularly elaborate and rhetorical and it may be suggested that this is a deliberate stylistic device by the poet, who wishes to underline one of the themes of feast, namely that unlettered fishermen received the gift of tongues and proved themselves more skilful than trained rhetoricians. It abounds in rare poetic words, found mainly in Homer and the tragedians, as well as what appear to be coinages by the poet, famous among which is the composite word of twenty nine letters that occupies all but one iambus in fourth line of the final troparion of Ode 8.

Like St Kosmas, the writer is indebted to St Gregory the Theologian for a number of his ideas and expressions. Many of these are noted by St Nikodemos in his commentary, which is an indispensable tool for anyone who attempts to translate this canon. It is not an easy canon to translate and the following version is only tentative. The version published by the Holy Transfiguration Monastery, apart from being written in an American variety of that curious dialect of English that can only be described as 'Ortho-speak', is marred by a number of elementary errors in the construing of the Greek. To some of these I draw attention in the notes.

The acrostic is particularly elaborate, consisting as it does, of the first letter of each line of each troparion. This makes it clear that the canon originally had all nine odes, since ten lines are missing between odes one and

three. I have not attempted to reproduce the acrostic, nor to render the Greek iambics by English ones. I have, on the other hand, kept the five line arrangement of the troparia. I have, though, tried to reproduce the scansion of the acrostic.

The notes are not in any way intended as commentary, but simply draw attention to some of the many interesting features of this remarkable composition.

THE CANON

In Iambics, whose acrostic is contained in the following elegiac couplets:

Only-begotten of God, from the heart of the Father you sent to
Those upon earth once again other Advocate,¹ Spirit divine,
Bringing, in tongues made of fire, of the pure, immaterial Godhead,
Sign of your nature and grace for those who are minstrels of praise.

A Composition of Kyr John Arklas.

Ode 1. Tone 4. Irmos.

The slow of tongue², covered in divine darkness,
Proclaimed the law written by God;
For shaking the dust from his mind's eye,
He sees the One Who Is³, and is initiated
Into knowledge of the Spirit, praising with songs inspired.

Troparia

The revered and august mouth spoke,
'For you my friends there will be no parting⁴.
For I, once seated with him on my Father's lofty throne,
Will pour out the copious grace of the Spirit⁵
To shine on those who yearn'.⁶

The firm Definition⁷, most precise Word,
Brings calm perfection to the heart;
For, his work accomplished, Christ gladdened his friends,

¹ John 15:26

² The word used of Moses in the Septuagint at Exodus 4:10.

³ Exodus 3:14

⁴ A very rare word, some two dozen times in TLG. Cf. Matthew 28:20.

⁵ Joel 3:28

⁶ Luke 24:49

⁷ This phrase is from St Gregory the Theologian. In his Theological Oration *On The Son* he says, 'One could perhaps say that the Son's relationship is that of definition to term defined, since "word" has the meaning in Greek of "definition". ... The Son is the concise and simple revelation of the Father's nature'. The only other English versions I have seen, not realising this, mistranslate. That of the Holy Transfiguration Monastery [HTM] even violates elementary Greek grammar.

With a mighty wind and tongues of fire,⁸
Apportioning the Spirit, as he had promised.⁹

Ode 3. Irmos.

Only the prayer of Anna, the prophetess
Of old, who brought a broken spirit
To the Mighty One and God of knowledge,
Broke the fetters of a childless womb
And the harsh insult of one with many children.¹⁰

Troparia

Inapprehensible is the Godhead¹¹;
For it revealed the unlettered to be orators,
Bridling the mouths of sophists in abundance¹² with a word,
And raising from deep night
Unnumbered peoples by the Spirit's lightning flash.
From the unbegotten Light proceeded¹³
The imperishable Splendour, illuminating with almighty operation¹⁴,
Whose fiery sound in Sion now reveals
To the nations the consubstantial beacon
Of the Father's authority through the Son.

Ode 4. Irmos.

Monarch of monarchs, Alone¹⁵ from the Alone,
Word issuing from the Father who has no cause,
As Benefactor you have unerringly sent out
To the Apostles your Spirit, equal in strength,
As they sing, 'Glory to your might, O Lord!'¹⁶

Troparia.

Having by a word mixed the divine bath of rebirth¹⁷
With a compounded nature,

⁸ Acts 2:1-4

⁹ John 15:26, 16:7, Luke 24:49, Acts 2:33

¹⁰ 1 Reigns 1:1-6 (2:1-10 forms the 3rd Ode)

¹¹ A word characteristic of the Dionysian writings.

¹² HTM again perpetrates an elementary howler, translating the adverb ἄλλως as though it were ἄλος, 'of the sea'

¹³ John 15:26

¹⁴ The phrase consists of one word, a *hapax*, πανσθενουργόφωτατον.

¹⁵ This is an allusion to St Gregory the Theologian's theological poem on the Son.

Οὐκ ἄλλος θεότητι, Θεοῦ Λόγος, οὗτος ἐκείνου

Σφρηγὶς κιννυμένη πατρῴος, Υἱὸς ἀνάρχου

Οἶος, καὶ μούνοιο μονώτατος, ἰσοφέριστος. [PG 37:400] The last word appears to be a coinage by St Gregory, who uses it twice.

HTM again disregards both spelling and grammar.

¹⁶ A slight adaptation to the stock 'refrain' of the 4th Ode, which St Nikodemus connects with Anvakoum 3:19.

¹⁷ Titus 3:5

You rain down¹⁸ upon me a stream from your immaculate,
Pierced side, O Word of God,
Sealing me with the fervour of the Spirit¹⁹.

All things bend the knee²⁰ to the Advocate,
To the Offspring of the Father, to the consubstantial Father;
For they know unerringly²¹ in three Persons
One, unapproachable, timeless Essence;
For the grace of the Spirit has caused light to shine.

As many as are worshippers of the Essence with Triple Light,
All be consecrated²² to the Godhead.
For, as our Benefactor, Christ perfects supernaturally
And lights a fiery torch²³ for our salvation,
Furnishing all the grace of the Spirit.

Ode 5. Irmos.

O light-formed²⁴ children of the Church,
Receive the Spirit's fire-breathing dew,
A redeeming purification of offences²⁵;
For now a law has gone out from Sion,²⁶
The torch-tongue-formed²⁷ grace of the Spirit.

Troparia

As he was well-pleased, of his own authority
The un-mastered Spirit comes down from the Father,
Making the Apostles wise with tongues²⁸,
Might of the Father,²⁹ one in form, setting the seal
Upon the life-bearing³⁰ word, which³¹ the Saviour spoke.

¹⁸ A coinage by the poet, only otherwise attested in Suidas.

¹⁹ The phrase used as the *zeon* is poured into the chalice in the earlier, and more correct, text of the Liturgy

²⁰ cf. Isaias 45:23, Romans 14:11, Philippians 2:10

²¹ A Homeric word also used by the Tragedians. HTM, which apparently regards neuter and feminine as the same thing, mistranslate this adverb

²² Cf. Numbers 25:3 and Psalm 105:28, but the idea of 'perfecting' is also present.

²³ This verb is a *hapax*, though it is not listed in Lampe.

²⁴ The other attested use of this word is in St John Damascene's homily on the Annunciation [PG 96:656]: Χαῖρε, δι' ἧς ἡμεῖς τὴν ψυχοσωτήριον καὶ φωτόμορφον κατέχομεν πίστιν.

²⁵ An uncommon word, ἀμπλακημάτων.

²⁶ Isaias 2:3-4.

²⁷ A word also used by Sophronios of Jerusalem (†638).

²⁸ This rare epic form of the dative plural (9 times) is used by St Gregory three times, once in his poem on the Holy Spirit, Οἷς ῥα καὶ ἐν γλώσσησι πυρὸς μετέπειτ' ἐμερίσθη, [PG 37:410]

²⁹ A *hapax*, listed in the anonymous catalogue of words found in the Canons for Christmas, Theophany and Pentecost, dated by the editor to the 8/10 the centuries

³⁰ A mainly poetic word, used elsewhere by St John Damascene, and by St Gregory in his poem on the Holy Spirit [PG37:408],

God the Word, all-sovereign, healed³² the minds
Of the Apostles of sin, and made ready
An immaculate dwelling for himself;³³
Now the light of the Spirit dwells in them,
Equal in strength and consubstantial.

Ode 6. Irmos.

As pardon and salvation for us,
Christ, our Master, you shone from the Virgin,
That like the prophet Jonas³⁴ from the belly
Of the sea beast, you might snatch from corruption
The whole fallen race of Adam.

Troparia

Almighty, renew a cherished³⁵, a right Spirit
Within us,³⁶ to hold it eternally,
Who is ever united and proceeding from the Father³⁷,
Purging hateful matter, burning³⁸
Defilements and filth of minds.

For the Apostles who awaited your coming
In Sion you establish with fiery wind
A longed for dignity, O Spirit,
Knowledge of the Word begotten of the Father³⁹,
Swiftly exposing the harsh chatter of the nations' cajoleries⁴⁰.

Ode 7.

Harmonious melody of instruments decreed
Reverence to the lifeless idol⁴¹ wrought of gold⁴².

Πανσθενές, αιολόδωρον, ἀγνής ὕμνημα χορείης,
Οὐρανίων χθονίων τε φερέσβιον, ὑψητόωκον,
Πατρόθεν ἐρχόμενον, θεῖον μένος, αὐτοκέλευστον.

³¹ HTM here treat masculine and neuter as the same and therefore mistranslate.

³² A form found once, outside the ancient lexica, including the Word List mentioned above, in Lucian.

³³ Cf. John14:23 and 15:3.

³⁴ Jonas 2.

³⁵ A poetic word, not in Scripture or the Fathers.

³⁶ Psalm 50:9. Cf. Ecclesiastes 7:29, God made humanity 'right', 'upright'.

³⁷ Πατροπροβλήτως. A *hapax*, only attested otherwise in Zonaras' lexicon

³⁸ Pace HTM, this adjective, which is genitive plural, qualifies 'defilements', not 'Spirit', which is neuter singular.

³⁹ Πατρογέννητος. A *hapax*.

⁴⁰ An onomatopoeic word used to describe the smacking of the lips. It passes as such into Latin. Lampe's reference to 'barbarian speech' slightly misses the point, I think. The word is used, for example, by St Gregory in his Paschal Sermon (μήτε ἵππον θερμὸν καὶ ὑπερήλικα χαλινῶ τυραννίδα, δίχα τινὸς κολακείας καὶ πομπυσμάτων. PG 36:640) and by St Theodore the Studite to describe the sort of noises used to attract a unbroken horse.

⁴¹ A not very common, poetic, word meaning strictly a 'wooden idol' and used colloquially of a 'blockhead'.

⁴² Daniel 3:4

But the Advocate's life-bearing grace
Inspires with reverence to cry, 'Only Trinity,
Equal in strength, without beginning, blessed are you!'

Troparia

Fools did not recognise the voice spoken of
In prophecy⁴³, called it drunkenness wrought of wine⁴⁴,
When the strange sayings of the Apostles were heard⁴⁵.
We, the devout, inspired by God, cry out to you,
'Renewer of the universe, blessed are you!'

The seer Joel,⁴⁶ inspired by God, thundered an oracle
Of the divine Word, who said,
'Those on whom I pour my Spirit
Will cry out together, "Nature,
Shining-with-threefold-splendour⁴⁷, blessed are you!"'

The third hour⁴⁸ was blessed with grace,
To indicate that we should worship
Three Persons in singleness of authority;
But now on the one Lord⁴⁹ of days,
Son, Father, Spirit, blessed are you!

Ode 8.

The triple radiant⁵⁰ type of Godhead's source
Looses the bonds and turns the flame to dew;
Youths give praise; while all created nature
Blesses the only Saviour and Creator
Of all as Benefactor.⁵¹

Troparia

Coming to rest in appearance like-fiery-tongues⁵²,
The Spirit, caused remembrance of the mortal-saving⁵³ words
Which Christ, heard-as-from-the-Father⁵⁴, spoke

⁴³ Προφητόφλεγκτος. A *hapax*. Joel 3:1-5, Acts 2:16

⁴⁴ There is an intentional play on 'wrought of gold' in the previous troparion.

⁴⁵ The verb is a *hapax*, literally 'to strange-hear', but Lampe cites an emendation which removes it.

⁴⁶ Joel 3:1-5

⁴⁷ In Greek τρισοφειγγόφωτος. A *hapax*. 1 Reigns 9:9, for the prophet as 'seer'.

⁴⁸ Acts 2:15

⁴⁹ A play on the Greek for 'Sunday', Κυριακή, or 'Lord's Day'. Since 'day' in Greek is feminine, the word used is 'Lady', but in English this would obscure the point. There is also an allusion to Genesis 1:5, 'one day', not 'first day'.

⁵⁰ A second use in the Canon of this coinage.

⁵¹ Daniel 3

⁵² A *hapax*.

⁵³ Elsewhere only twice in the *Orphica*.

⁵⁴ Another *hapax*.

To the Apostles. Creation, once estranged,
Now reconciled, sings of you as blessed.

As Saviour, coming of his own authority,
Light shining of itself and provider of light,⁵⁵
You sent⁵⁶ to the Apostles, bringing himself
As a precious wind⁵⁷. While to your servants
You distribute the Spirit so earnestly prayed for.

The spirit-filled⁵⁸ mouth of Prophets sang
Of your sojourning, high Lord⁵⁹, in bodily form.⁶⁰
And your Spirit proceeding from the Father's bosom,
Uncreated-cofashioning-cothroned,⁶¹
You send to believers for the worship of the incarnation.

Ode 9.

Hail, Queen, glory of virgins and mothers;
For every mouth fluent⁶² and eloquent
With oratory has not the strength to sing you worthily;
But every mind is dizzy when it seeks to understand
Your giving birth; therefore with one accord we glorify you.

Troparia.

It is right to sing⁶³ of the Maiden who produced life;
For she alone concealed in the vortex⁶⁴ of her womb
The Word, who heals the ailing⁶⁵ nature of mortals.
Now seated on the couch⁶⁶ at the right hand
Of the Father, he has sent the grace of the Spirit.

On as many as the grace which flows from God has breathed,
Resplendent, dazzling, transformed
With a strange, most glorious transformation,
We have come to know the Essence of equal might, indivisible,
Wise, of triple radiance; and we give It glory.

⁵⁵ St Gregory in his sermon for Pentecost (Oratio 41) has the expression ζωή, καὶ ζωοποιόν· φῶς, καὶ χορηγὸν φωτός· αὐτοαγαθὸν, καὶ πηγὴ ἀγαθότητος. [PG 36:441]

⁵⁶ As St Nikodemos points out, this troparion is addressed to Christ. The verb here is from the irregular verb 'to send', not the verb 'to have come', as HTM seem to think. The difficulty in translation is that the poet also wants to assert the 'independence' of the Spirit. He is 'sent', but acts on his own authority.

⁵⁷ St Gregory in his poems employs the words Ψυχὴ δ' ἔστιν ἄημα Θεοῦ. St Theodore the Studite uses it once in a poem. Otherwise it is very rare and poetic.

⁵⁸ A *hapax*. Lampe is misleading, the word only occurs elsewhere in the lexica.

⁵⁹ Μέδων. An Homeric word.

⁶⁰ Cf. Psalm 106:20, Isaias 61:1, Baruch 3:38

⁶¹ This celebrated *hapax* occupies all but the final foot of the line.

⁶² Apart from Nonnus and Paul the Silentiary, only in the lexica.

⁶³ Ὕδεν. Elsewhere only in the lexica.

⁶⁴ The word means an 'eddy' or 'whirlpool'. HTM's 'vault' is singularly inapposite.

⁶⁵ A rare medical word.

⁶⁶ An epic word. In Odyssey 1, 145 the suitors are seated 'on couches and thrones'.