



Canticles

Source: Atiya, Aziz S. (ed.), *The Coptic Encyclopedia*, vol. 6, (New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1991), p. 1729.

In addition to the Psalms, some of the early Christian churches adopted into their system of canonical offices certain Old Testament praises and prayers which are known today as *canticles*. The Coptic church recognizes twenty-one in all, eighteen from the Old Testament and three from the New Testament. Two of the Old Testament canticles are also sung as *hos* during the office of *Psalmodia* (*Hos* One, the Song of Moses, and *Hos* Three, the Song of the Three Holy Children). The three from the New Testament are embedded as Gospel lections in six hymns of the Sunday Theotokia for Kiyahk. These are: the Song of Mary (Lk. 1:46-55, known in the West as the Magnificat); the Song of Simeon (Lk. 2:29-32, known as the Nunc Dimittis); and the Prayer of Zacharias (Lk. 2:69-79, known as the Benedictus).

The full set of canticles is performed at the vigil service on the night of Good Friday (the eve of Saturday). For this service, the officiant and his deacons are seated around a low table upon which are placed three lighted candles, and they read the Biblical prayers and hymns, each deacon taking his turn at reading one canticle. The Song of Moses and the Song of the Three Holy Children are performed in Coptic. All the rest are recited in Arabic. The full set includes:

OLD TESTAMENT (LXX)

1. Song of Moses (Ex. 15:1-21).
2. Second Song of Moses (Dt. 32:1-43).
3. Prayer of Hannah (1 Sm. 2:1-11).
4. Prayer of Habakkuk (Hb. 3:2-19).
5. Prayer of Jonah (Jon. 2:2-10).
6. Prayer of Hezekiah (Is. 38:10-20).

APOCRYPHA

7. Prayer of Manasses (Man. 1-15).

OLD TESTAMENT (LXX)

8. Prayer of Isaiah (1) (Is. 26:9-20).
9. Praise of Isaiah (2) (Is. 25:1-12).
10. Praise of Isaiah (3) (Is. 26:1-9).
11. Praise of Jeremiah (Lam. 5:16-22).

APOCRYPHA

12. Praise of Baruch (Bar. 2:11-16).

OLD TESTAMENT (LXX)

13. Praise of Elijah (1 Kgs. 18:26-39).
14. Prayer of David (2 Kgs. 29:10-13).

15. Prayer of King Solomon (1 Kgs. 8:22-30).
16. Prayer of Daniel (Dn. 9:4-19).
17. Vision of Daniel (3:1-23).

APOCRYPHA

18. Son of the Three Children (Dn. 1-67).

NEW TESTAMENT

19. Song of Mary (Lk. 1:46-55).
20. Song of Simeon (Lk. 2:29-32).
21. Prayer of Zachariah (Lk. 1:68-79).

RAGHEB MOFTAH
MARTHA ROY