

The Transfiguration on Tabor: A Vision of a Vision

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The Transfiguration is at the very heart of Christian theology, irresistibly commanding the gaze of the iconographer, the ready pen of the hymnographer, the amazing tales of the hagiographer, and constituting, one can say, the focal point of the Orthodox Church's "mystical theology." Much of early Christian exegesis uses the Transfiguration account as a springboard for spiritual rumination.

Thus the glory of the Transfiguration discloses Christ's divine identity, so that even when we behold the Crucified One we should not forget that He is the Lord of glory (1 Corinthians 2:8); the luminous vestments of the Lord represent the many layers of his divine and human reality, as disclosed to us in the many layers of the Scriptures; the blinding appearance of the Transfigured One sets before us the image of our glorified state in the age to come; the Taboric light is the deifying divine energy, that is, God-as-He-manifests-Himself. This approach, exemplified by Origen, St. Maximus the Confessor, or St. Gregory Palamas, is generally well-known. Indeed, many scholars (and many Orthodox theologians among them) have discussed the rich "reception history" that the Transfiguration account has had in patristic literature, East and West.

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